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BRONZE STATUE OF JOSEPH DE VEUSTER, FATHER DAMIEN,
in the Square outside the church of St. Jacques, rue de Bruxelles,
Louvain, Belgium.

PREFACE

‘Let those who think I have said too little, or those who think I have said too much, forgive me ; and let those who think I have said just enough join me in giving thanks to God.’

IRENE CAUDWELL.

DATES OF IMPORTANCE IN THE LIFE OF FATHER DAMIEN

1840	(January 3rd)	Birth at Tremeloo, near Louvain.
1859	(January 3rd)	Joined Society of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Louvain.
1863	(October)	Left Europe as missionary to Hawaii.
1864	(March)	Landed at Honolulu, Hawaii.
1873	(May)	Left Hawaii for Molokai.
1885	—	Stricken with leprosy.
1889	(April 15th)	Death at Molokai.

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Robert Louis Stevenson's Open Letter
to the Reverend Dr. Hyde of Honolulu

*Lepers are the Flowers of Paradise,
Pearls in the coronet of the Eternal King.*

—ST. HUGH OF LINCOLN.

CHAPTER I

HOME INFLUENCE

IT was winter, the frost-bound winter of Flanders fields, when Joseph de Veuster came into the world. His appearance caused very little stir in the quiet red-tiled farmhouse with its wooden shutters, for he was the seventh child which his sturdy Flemish mother had brought into the world, and there was little time for sentiment in that hard-working household. The third of January, 1840, might mark for the world the arrival of a saint and martyr, but for his parents it meant another mouth to feed, though withal, for they were good and true, another little soul to love and cherish, and for his small brothers and sisters a real live doll to add zest to their games.

The simple village home, that little farm at Tremeloo, six miles from Louvain, was situated between Aerschot and Malines, towns which in the next century were to weep tears of blood, wrecked and desecrated, but then lay smiling in the rich plain, treasure cities of art and history.

England knows little, and often seems to care less, for the smallholder, the little farmer like François de Veuster, who with the aid of his wife and family toils unceasingly in his own fields, often from dawn till dusk. Yet silent, sturdy, slow in his movements and conservative in his mind, he can be the backbone of his country, the harbourer of its riches, for he loves

the very soil with a deep, ingrained devotion, asking nothing better than to labour upon it till at length his bones, crippled with the rheumatism which is earth's final reward to her devotees, rest in its final embrace.

Little Joseph first figured in the family history when the hour came for him to receive his name. His parents, François and Catherine de Veuster, seem to have had no special choice, but his godfather, a deeply pious old soldier, asked that he should be called JOSEPH, after his own patron, the head of the Holy Family. That settled the matter, and the tiny baby was carried to the village church to receive the name of that noble, gentle saint, chosen above all other men as the guardian of his Lord's infant years.

From the first dawning of consciousness the child Joseph showed signs of a happy disposition, merry, yet quaint, richly endowed with the priceless gift of laughter, that great attribute of many a saint, the most potent medium for meeting the woes of life with courage. The joyous smile of Joseph de Veuster was to prove one of his greatest assets in aiding the agonised bodies and stricken souls of those who in after years would rise up and call him blessed.

He was only four years old, a mere toddler whose little dark head did not reach as high as the golden ears of corn which waved around his father's home-stead, when the first promise of that radiant life of the spirit first openly showed itself, which ultimately was to blossom to such gracious perfection. He had been lost since morning, and, search in Tremeloo having proved fruitless, it was remembered that the *Kermesse* was being held in a neighbouring village — the *Kermesse*, that gay, happy fair which in the country districts

of Flanders so often synchronises with the feast of the patron saint, and, attracting folk from miles round, is even kept up with more or less enthusiasm for so long as three days. Joseph's distracted relations rushed frantically over the cobblestones of the old market square, among the roundabouts, the fortune-tellers, the stalls of fancy gingerbread, the shooting galleries, the booths of freaks, human and otherwise, questioning the rosy, smiling peasants in their stiff Sunday clothes, but nowhere could the child be found. It was at this point that his godfather, the fine old soldier who had insisted on his baptismal name, came to the rescue.

"I will soon find our little Joseph," he said confidently. "I can guess where he is."

Leaving the jostling, laughing crowd, the village band with its red, perspiring faces, the booths with their attractive wares, the old man turned aside into the village church, where all day long solitary figures had slipped from the noise and gaiety into the brooding peace of that ever-abiding Presence. The building was almost deserted now, but close up to the altar, where in the darkening shadows the lamp hung like some great jewel before the Blessed Sacrament, knelt a solitary little figure. As the child's face turned, smiling up at his godfather, surely in the old man's mind the cry rang down the ages :

"How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

.

As so often happens, Joseph's parents, the sturdy Flemish farmer and his wife, though devout and God-fearing folk, had not grasped the deeply spiritual

temperament of their little son. Truly, there was much excuse for them, as this spirituality was extremely precocious, yet at the same time undoubtedly sincere. All children have a natural interest in religion ; the Gospel illustration of the children in the market-place playing at weddings and funerals before the eyes of the Divine Teacher is true of every country and every age, but in Joseph de Veuster's case it was not play, but intense reality. For all his happy disposition and quaint, laughing ways, his nature, so sensitive even in childhood to the Divine Call, caused him to weep bitterly at the least word of reproof for youthful carelessness, though never for one moment did this ultra-sensitiveness cause him to be unmanly either in thought or deed.

François and Catherine de Veuster were worthy specimens of that land drenched so often by the blood of religious strife. Their Faith was in no watertight compartment, to be used only on Sundays or when kneeling beside their beds at night. They were son and daughter of the soil, earning their bread in the fields which formed their small estate, intensely religious, though unemotional, given to the silence which comes from solidity of character and the necessity for unceasing labour.

An artist of the neighbouring country of France, Jean François Millet, has given us their portraits again and again, above all in the devout simplicity of his lovely 'Angelus,' where the peasant workers bow their heads and clasp their hands as the sweet-toned bell of the *Ave Maria* steals across the fields.

That quiet home at Tremeloo makes a picture worthy of the brush of a Vermeer or Pieter de Hooch

— the old Flemish kitchen with its stone floor and gleaming copper vessels, where the rosy, chubby faces of the Veuster children were reflected as they clustered round the mother's knee, the sacred prints upon the wall, the Crucifix and holy water stoup in the far corner. Seated in her old chair, her feet upon the sand-strewn floor, Catherine Veuster read stories of the saints and martyrs from the great book she held in her toil-worn hands — hands beautiful, not with the comeliness of shape or texture, but true mother's hands, red and roughened, made glorious with loving labour.

The children pressed closely to her, looking curiously at the heavy volume, two feet long and a foot and a half wide, with its quaint woodcuts and old Flemish type in thick black lettering they could not understand, which to their mother, daughter of an earlier generation, was perfectly plain and clear. With childhood's insistence, they begged again and again for the self-same stories, and seven-year-old Joseph's merry face and deep eyes grew earnest and thoughtful. But of all those tales of heroism and adventure, of earthly torture and the glories of Paradise, the hermit saints, those strange, mystical sons of the desert, appealed most directly to their youthful imagination. It was much the same call of brave deeds, of getting close to primitive things, overshadowed by a high ideal, which to-day all unconsciously pervades the mind of the small Boy Scout as he starts on his first camp ; the spirit of tiny St. Theresa as she planned to leave her father's house in order to convert the Moors ; the mind of that pathetic, noble band of youth which inaugurated the Children's Crusade.

St. Anthony the Anchorite, who dwelt alone in the Egyptian deserts, visited by devils and angels, spending the scorching days and burning nights in contemplation, most appealed to the de Veuster children. There was no desert in Belgium, with its waving cornfields, green pasture-lands, and giant windmills ; but make-believe is second nature to the very young, so that a charming little copse on the long walk to school was found to be of equal service. Turning aside beneath its leafy branches, satchels in hand, they knelt on the soft grass, with the birds chirping above their heads, determined to devote the rest of their lives to prayer and contemplation. In after years, when little Joseph's heroic life had finished its earthly course, his brother Augustus told of the determined way in which the seven-year-old child, youngest of them all, took to the hermit life.

At noon, still in strict silence, they opened their satchels, eating the frugal dinner of bread and butter, their childish faces set in lines of whimsical gravity, their eyes round and full of awe. The birds chirped gaily in the branches above their heads, the brook danced beneath sunshine and shadow beside them, tiny furry dwellers in the wood moved stealthily around, but the children paid no heed. Perhaps in the intense reality of their make-believe they likened the merry birds to the angels who visited St. Anthony, the tiny creatures of the undergrowth to the devils who tormented him.

The bread and butter consumed to the last crumb, each child again knelt upon the grass, entirely devoted to prayer and devotion until the shadows lengthened and the gold and crimson glory of the sunset

penetrated even the thickness of the trees. But these things meant nothing to the young hermits ; they had solemnly bidden farewell to all earthly ties ; home, parents, friends, and school, even their little white beds, were gone for ever. It was a sublime act of faith, for by this time they must have been extremely hungry, and the courageous little bodies were becoming as limp as the empty satchels flung on the grass beside them.

But few are called to be hermits, and certainly the de Veuster family were not meant to be among their number, for at nine o'clock a passer-by, observing the children, hurriedly acquainted their distracted parents, so that it was not long before the youthful followers of St. Anthony were being escorted home to supper and to bed.

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Joseph, though beloved by all who knew him, was never fond of rough games with other boys ; his mystical, sympathetic character delighted more in roaming the fields with the shepherds, spending long hours playing with the lambs. His fondness for the sheep, especially his tender handling of the lambs, as they gambolled on the grass with their absurdly tall, stiff legs, caused him to be known as *le Petit Berger* – the ‘Little Shepherd.’ The prophetic symbolism of this name must have been realised by many of his companions in after years.

Love of animals and affinity with them is a beautiful characteristic of many of the saints – the case of St. Francis of Assisi and the wolf being an excellent example. A remarkable story of Joseph de Veuster

when a boy shows another phase in his sympathy with the animal world. Every day on his way to school, laughing gaily with his comrades, he passed a tiny cottage where there lived a widow and her family whose livelihood depended almost entirely upon a cow, her solitary possession. Great was Joseph's sympathy on hearing that the precious animal was ill, so ill that the doctor had given up all hope for its life. Joseph, running into the cottage, spoke with kindly, gentle words to the distracted woman, telling her he would like to endeavour to save the cow during the coming night. Permission being gladly given, the little schoolboy went to the shed where the suffering creature lay in a most unhappy position, for the doctor had just turned away in despair and the butcher stood over her, his deadly knife gleaming in his hand.

In a few words Joseph offered his services, explaining that if the animal had to be put to death the deed could be done equally well in the morning. Both doctor and butcher knew the Little Shepherd's love for animals, and quickly consented to leave the sick beast in his merciful hands. But first, with an inward shudder, he possessed himself of the knife, prepared to use it should his patient's sufferings become intolerable. Left alone, the little schoolboy watched in the gloomy shed, with no companionship but the flickering light of the lantern and the dumb, agonised eyes of the stricken animal. None can tell what form his ministrations took during the long hours of that dreary night ; it is certain he was not unmindful of One who was born in a stable amid the humble beasts, for in the morning, when they sought him, the cow was so far on the road to recovery that within a very few days she

was restored to her usual condition of bovine contentment.

This intense love of the animal world is also shown by an earlier incident, though unfortunately in this case the small Joseph's kindness of heart was much abused. School being some way from home, Madame de Veuster provided the children with generous helpings of bread and butter, which they ate during the luncheon hour, on the premises. Let it be said at once that, although this sounds a very frugal repast, it was not the dry bread and margarine of modern youth, but slices from long, crisp rolls, spread with real dairy butter. Nevertheless, it was a great treat when occasionally Madame substituted home-made cakes for the more simple fare, and it requires no stretch of imagination to picture little Master Joseph and his companions looking longingly into their satchels for a refreshing glimpse of the dainties within, as they plodded along the dusty Flanders road.

At lunchtime, as they sat in a hungry row upon the stone bench outside the schoolhouse, a beggar-boy, Sus van Beal, attracted by the cakes, drew near with longing eyes and artful voice.

"I took a magpie for each of you to your house after you had gone to school this morning."

After such magnanimity as this, it was natural that each of the children should give the wistful beggar a cake from the cherished store, but Joseph, the youngest of the bunch, with his big, generous heart, cried eagerly :

"Let us give them all to him ; the poor boy is always in want."

Fired by his example, the children poured their

cakes into the beggar's outstretched hands, and hungry, but happy, returned to afternoon school. But, alas for their heroic act of supererogation, when, tired, breathless, and famished, they burst in upon their mother, demanding to see the wonderful birds, they were quickly disillusioned. Magpies and Master Sus van Beal were equally to be numbered among the missing.

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Few boys come through childhood without more or less risk to life and limb, and, seeing how appalling many of these risks are, it speaks well for the efficiency of their guardian angels.

The elder de Veuster children, when in after years their young brother had become a celebrity, loved to tell the story of his miraculous escape from death on an occasion when a kindly driver, seeing them trudging along in the dust, offered them a ride to school. Joseph, climbing merrily into the cart, missed his footing, and fell sprawling on his face in front of the wheel. The horse, startled with the children's screams of horror, plunged forward, so that the wheel passed over the boy's head and body.

His terrified companions, seeing him lie partly stunned, with his little face hidden in the white road, believed him to be dead, and ran hurriedly back to the farmhouse, telling his mother he had been run over. Madame de Veuster, overcome with grief, rushed to the scene in a terrible state, only to find her beloved child little the worse except for a bump on his head and a dark bruise on his back. Joseph de Veuster was not so soon to yield up his precious life.

As he grew older, and infancy gave place to early boyhood, he began to fear that the pleasures and excitements of life might prove too much for him. In these days, when often children are satiated with amusements before they have left school and it is hard to find a gift or a distraction which will rouse them from boredom, it is difficult to realise what Joseph could have feared in the way of worldly temptations in that simple home and quiet village nearly one hundred years ago. It is true that comforts and plain, nourishing food existed in plenty in the little farmhouse, but there was no money for luxuries or festivities in a household where Joseph was the seventh child, with another even younger than himself. Yet the mother's stories of saints and martyrs still influenced his consciousness, so that he tried various secret means of mortification. Madame Veuster, good, pious soul, had very strong notions of bringing up her family in full health, both physical and mental, so that Joseph was never allowed to carry out these methods of discipline in her presence by going without the amount of food she thought proper and necessary. Being of an extremely obedient disposition, though already showing signs of strength of character, Joseph looked round for some other means of keeping his vigorous little body in subjection.

One happy day he managed to secrete a plank beneath his bed in the room which he shared with his dearly-loved brother, Augustus, another devout young soul, two years older than himself. It is a well-known fact, proved to many a harassed English hostess in the days of refugees in the Great War, that no Belgian, however young, will share his bed with another. It

simply is not done. So that evening the two brothers each got into his bed in the usual way, but later, Augustus, waking in the moonlight, rubbed his sleepy eyes, trying to understand whatever had happened to Joseph. His curiosity indeed was so great that, jumping up, he pattered across the floor in his bare feet, to discover that the youthful ascetic had quietly dragged out the plank from under his bed, laid it on the top, and wrapping himself in his coverlets, was slumbering peacefully.

Augustus, somewhat alarmed, awoke him and asked for an explanation. Joseph in giving it begged that Madame Veuster should not be told, and for a time he regularly slept upon his self-inflicted cross. One inauspicious morning he forgot to remove it, and great was the good mother's horror on its discovery, so that she quickly decreed the offending plank must be removed and her small boy sleep in the comfortable bed she had provided. Joseph, as usual obedient to the 'powers that be,' discarded his board and found other means of following the examples of the saints. Well was it for his devoted mother she little guessed that in the future the earth itself would often form her darling's bed !

Even these very early years show that Joseph was possessed in full measure of the troublesome gift of an extremely active conscience, a spiritual prize which makes a beautiful frame to the picture of a favourite saint, but which is not always acceptable to oneself. In the young de Veuster's case it produced extreme sensitiveness, so that, as has been seen, he was even reduced to tears when reproved for any childish act of negligence or carelessness. He must not for

this reason be condemned of the detestable trait of priggishness, nor for the unpleasing characteristic of effeminacy — later events free him from any suspicion of the latter ; he had merely inherited that attribute of many a holy soul — a super-sensitive consciousness. Through what anguish of repentance, what dark valleys of tears, what splendours of vision, this possession led him, none but those likewise endowed can ever realise !

It was soon evident that work on the farm was unsuitable for his career. That he was fully acquainted with manual labour is abundantly proved by the practical manner in which with his own hands he acted as builder, sanitary engineer, carpenter, gardener, and even grave-digger, in his far-off South Sea Island parish. He had found the secret of success taught by the wise old sage so many centuries before his own, ‘ Whosoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.’ His active mind very quickly absorbed all the instruction available in the village school, and for some years little scope was found for his great love of study. But during this period he was far from idle, and, working ceaselessly on his father’s farm, he learnt the many practical lessons which were to prove so valuable an asset in his life-work.

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Although always merry and bright, everyone’s friend, and beloved by all with whom he came in contact, young Joseph does not appear to have spent much time in games with the lads of the village. His favourite pastime seems to have been skating, at which he was an expert. The canals and rivers round his

home, frozen over for months together, gave many opportunities for indulging in this sport, and he often carried out many errands for his neighbours in this manner. It is easy to picture the sturdy Belgian boy, his rounded cheeks rosy with the bitter wind, gliding mile after mile along the frozen waterways, the tall, snow-covered elms beside him, silhouetted like fairy trees against the pale blue of the wintry sky. How often in after years, beneath the burning sun, limp and exhausted with tropical heat, he must have thought of those care-free hours, as like a bird he skimmed lightly over the glittering ice !

On one occasion, pressed for time, moving swiftly along the frozen Dyle, he came suddenly to the junction of the Laak, where, with a lightning stab of horror, he perceived an abyss opening directly beneath his feet. With a supreme effort he managed a sharp turn to avoid the awful danger, then, stopping cautiously, returned to examine the horror he had escaped. His skate had skirted the extreme edge of the chasm. For a moment he gazed at the dark waters of the whirlpool, then, falling on his knees, thanked God and his guardian angel who had preserved him from such deadly peril. For long after, even his courageous soul could not call to mind that moment without an inward shudder.

CHAPTER II

THE PREPARATION

As he grew older, Joseph de Veuster's exceptional gifts for learning seeming to indicate a commercial career, his parents with some sacrifice raised sufficient money to send him to college at Braine-le-Comte, in the Province of Hainault, more particularly for the study of French, his mother-tongue being Flemish.

Belgium, composed of two distinct nationalities, speaks two languages. Roughly divided, her northern inhabitants are akin to their Dutch neighbours, whose ancestry they share. They are a slow-moving race, chiefly agriculturists, their language being Flemish. Their countrymen of the south are Walloons, speaking French, and closely allied in racial characteristics to their kinsmen of France. In the main they are manufacturers, in temperament more vivid and passionate than their northern brothers. The two have little in common beyond the tie of patriotism, and many problems have arisen on the question of language, owing not only to the difficulties of the Flemish tongue, but also on account of its varied dialects, which make it quite possible even in the capital city of Brussels to find a visitor from the northern provinces who cannot make himself understood. That Joseph de Veuster met with this racial antipathy is proved by a letter home mentioning that 'any Walloon who laughs at

me, I hit with a ruler.' The embryo saint was not yet entirely regenerate !

The young man's keen intellect and retentive memory stood him in good stead in his studies, to which he addressed himself with remarkable vigour. Although possessed of an exceptionally good constitution, he almost overtaxed his strength by the ardour with which he pursued the path of learning, using even his walks and recreation for the purpose of acquiring knowledge. Those familiar with Hobbema's picture of the 'Avenue at Middelharnis,' hanging in the National Gallery, London, can well picture the scenery he encountered on those solitary walks — the long white road bordered by the tremulous, delicate poplars, the little fairy village at the end of the vista with its red roofs and tall church spire, on either hand the countryside, with carefully tended fields, green meadows, and tiny copse. In after years the calm orderliness of it all must often have returned to his mind as, 'crowned with glories and horrors, he toiled and rotted in that pigsty of his under the cliffs of Kalawao.'

The college evidently seemed at first a very lonely place to the home-loving boy, separated also from his beloved Augustus, who by this time had entered the convent¹ of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary at Louvain, to train for the Holy Office of Priesthood. Many affectionate letters passed between the brothers at this period, showing that Joseph at an age when so many lads pass through a stage of distaste, even almost contempt, for the old life, bore an ever deepening

¹ Throughout the following pages the word 'convent' is used as meaning a monastic establishment, not in its modern designation as referring to a nunnery.

affection for his parents and a real sense of gratitude for the love and care they had so generously lavished upon him.

A letter written to his father and mother while in the college at Braine-le-Comte is typical of these marked traits in his character :

'I am very glad to get a little free time, as it gives me this opportunity of conversing with you for a few moments. It is to you, my dear parents, that I owe, not only my present happiness, but also the education which I am now receiving and which will be of profit to me all my life. I do not know how I can prove, as I ought, my gratitude to you for all the benefits you have conferred upon me, from my earliest years.'

It has been seen that Joseph had very early shown a strong love for the things of the spirit, combined with a deep interest in the services and ceremonial of the Church, and it was at the impressionable age of eighteen that he took part in his first Mission, conducted by the Redemptorist Fathers in 1858. The beautiful church of Braine-le-Comte, crowded with great congregations full of ardour and devotion, the impassioned singing and inspired sermons, the whole atmosphere electric with faith and emotion, acted upon the sensitive soul of the young student with an irresistible force. The first night he did not go to bed at all, but spent the time on his knees in silent prayer and meditation. And through those long hours of darkness it is possible the world lost a great captain of industry, but the modern Church found one of its greatest saints. Joseph de Veuster had found his vocation — that greatest vocation of all, known only to the favoured few, who, leaving all

that life holds dear, walk with bare and bleeding feet on the sacred Way of the Cross.

The first problem the young aspirant for the cloister had to face was the difficulty of breaking the news to his parents, who, having sacrificed so much for his education, were obviously looking forward to his career as a successful business man. An opportunity seemed to present itself when news came from home saying that one of his sisters had made her Profession as a nun, so that Joseph, in reply, asked whether it would be possible for him to follow his brother Augustus, now known as Father Pamphile, into the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary at Louvain, often called the Picpus Fathers, from the name of their House in the Faubourg St. Antoine in Paris. This house in the French capital was the place in which the Community had first been established, and it still remained the residence of the Superior-General of the Order.

Monsieur and Madame de Veuster at first withheld their consent to their son's petition, either with a view to testing his vocation, seeing his extreme youth, or possibly from some other equally good reason. The parents' consent being so important a factor in any crisis in the life of a Belgian boy, and particularly in the case of this special boy, whose devotion and obedience to his father and mother were so highly developed, Joseph was obliged to possess his soul in patience. But the Divine Call, once heard, can never be silenced ; sleeping or waking, it urges the soul with an insistence which cannot be ignored, even to the extent of crying aloud :

‘ He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.’

This waiting time must have been hard for the young man's ardent soul, yet it was necessary, for it taught him life's stern lesson of patience, together with the driving-force which lies in continual prayer. It was after a particularly fervent Communion on the Christmas Day of 1858 that he wrote again to his parents, and this time the simple earnestness of the appeal was so unmistakably genuine that their opposition was withdrawn. Indeed, to pious souls such as François and Catherine de Veuster, this letter must have given great spiritual joy, revealing as it did the depth and sincerity of their son's character.

' This great Feast has brought me the certainty that God has called me to quit the world and embrace the religious state, therefore, my dear parents, I ask again for your consent, for without it I cannot venture to enter on this career. God's commandment to obey our parents does not apply only to childhood.'

Joseph's first thoughts had been to ally himself to the Trappists, that stern, amazing Brotherhood whose vow embraces perpetual silence (except for devotion and salutation), severe abstinence, eleven hours spent daily in prayer, and much hard manual labour, but maturer consideration and the advice of Augustus decided him to join his brother at the convent of the Picpus Fathers in Louvain.

The University of Louvain, the former capital of the Province of Brabant, has a long history as one of the most celebrated seats of learning, having been founded towards the close of the seventh century. Its glorious library was completely destroyed during the Great War, when many unique volumes and manuscripts were irrevocably lost. The University has

held faculties of law, medicine, arts, and theology, but the last-named has always been the most representative of Louvain. A Séminaire Générale was established in the city in 1876 for the education of youths intended for the Priesthood.

On Joseph's nineteenth birthday, January 3rd, 1859, Monsieur de Veuster, having business in Louvain, took the boy to interview the Father Superior at the Picpus Convent, arranging to call for him later. But Joseph had a different design simmering in his active brain that the slower moving mind of his father never suspected, this being nothing less than remaining henceforth in the convent, and no sooner was the worthy farmer's back turned away than Joseph besought his brother, Father Pamphile, to obtain leave from the Superior to allow him to stay under his roof.

The Superior, with rare insight, recognising the boy's vocation shining in his earnest eyes, gave permission for him to remain, and great was Monsieur de Veuster's surprise when he called for him later in the day. Joseph met him with humble apologies, begging that he might be excused from returning home, skilfully insisting that in this way his mother would be spared the long-drawn anguish of a more formal parting. His father, whose behaviour throughout seems to have shown utmost submission to what he must have regarded as the Divine ordering of events, went quietly away, and, amid the brass and copper pots and pans of the humble Flemish kitchen, informed his wife that her son had bade farewell to his home for ever.

The decision of the Father Superior quickly proved to be justified, and some time later he remarked :

'From the first moment Damien lived in the Community as if he had spent several years in it. To witness his very deportment, the great joy which, tempered with calmness and serenity, pictured the happiness and peace of his soul, was to call to mind the words of St. Aloysius uttered on entering the cell of his novitiate, "I find my repose in this house ; here will I live, because it is the house of my choice."

Before finally entering the convent of the Picpus Fathers, Joseph returned home for a month. The last evening in the old farmhouse kitchen was spent in quiet conversation with his father and mother about the future, and the happy prospect of meeting in another world where partings would be unknown. As he left next morning with his parents' blessing resting upon him, the village turned out to wish him God-speed, waving friendly, loving hands from their cottage doors as he passed along, sorrowing that they would rarely see his bright, joyous face, his tender smile, again.

It is well, in this age when parents so often think that the making of money is the one criterion, the only ideal for which their children should work, to remember the quiet self-sacrifice of those two hard-working Flemish peasants, François and Catherine de Veuster. Two of their daughters had left them and become nuns ; one son, Pamphile, was already a monk ; and now Joseph, the apple of their eye, was to follow the same sacred calling. Four children given to God, and given with that complete surrender which only the convent walls can demand ! A magnificent example to

this and every generation ! It may be that, when the great bede-roll of the saints is called, such humble, pious souls as these may rank among the aristocracy of heaven.

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Even now that his feet were firmly set within the convent walls Joseph met another great difficulty, for the Father Superior found that the boy's commercial education was not sufficient to admit him as a candidate for the Priesthood, and it was therefore necessary, according to the rules of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts, to rank him among the choir or lay brothers. This necessitated many laborious and even menial duties, but the lad who a short while before had been accustomed to work in the fields from dawn to dusk made light of such things, and, while his strong young arms worked willingly at many uncongenial tasks, his mind rested upon the things of the spirit. And ever before him, even when it seemed most impossible, there gleamed the great ideal of the Holy Priesthood. Nor, in spite of his laborious days, did he forget his early endeavours at self-mortification.

The brothers shared a room in the convent just as in their boyhood days in the red-roofed farmhouse at Tremeloo, and Pamphile, waking one night in the same way as long ago, saw a strange, uncanny parcel, with curious bumps and curves, lying beside the younger boy's bed, which, on closer inspection, proved to be the lad himself wrapped in his blanket, fast asleep on the bare boards. Pamphile, knowing that the Father Superior had forbidden this practice, wakened his brother, and within a short time had the

satisfaction of seeing the ever-obedient Joseph safely tucked up in bed.

But the spirit of self-mortification was so strong, so deeply engrained into his soul, that he soon found other means of enforcing it. Throughout his life he was always extremely severe on himself, though at the same time his beautiful humility of character caused him to endeavour by innocent artifice to conceal his doings from those around him. In the convent it was remarked that if for some slight reason anything were missing from the refectory, he endeavoured to arrange that it should be he who should suffer the little privation, insisting on giving the meat to a hungry comrade, while he himself dined gaily on soup and potatoes.

A religious life, such as that followed by the Picpus Fathers, based on the vow of poverty, of necessity entailed many hardships, but Joseph, far from complaining, underwent them all diligently and cheerfully, often adding long night watches to those already enjoined, spending hours on his knees in prayer. Much has been written in praise of the bodies of the saints, grown thin and ascetic with fasting, their eyes burning with inward vision, their faces worn with watching and devotion. But nothing has been said about their humble knees, grown hard and calloused with many prayers. It is left for the stones in many an old monastery and ancient church, grown hollow where they have knelt, to tell the story of these.

This same love of penance is shown in the alacrity with which Joseph undertook any form of manual labour, however hard or dangerous. A delightful incident is recorded of an occasion when the Picpus

Fathers were building the chapel of their Louvain house, and the younger members of the Community were assisting the workmen. In preparing the site it was necessary to pull down a chimney so tall and rickety that all the workmen refused the dangerous task. But young de Veuster, quietly asking for a ladder and getting someone to steady it, took down the chimney brick by brick. The workmen, staring in astonishment, cried aloud : "*Mon Dieu ! Quel homme !*"

It is certain that a character such as his, afame with zeal and devotion, might easily have gone to extremes if it had not been for his gift of docility, by which the watchful guidance of the Father Superior was always diligently obeyed.

One never-to-be-forgotten day Father Pamphile, by way of pastime, proposed to teach him a few Latin sentences. Joseph's retentive memory easily grasped them, and in a few days the pastime had grown into a serious study, so much so that in an incredibly short time he had become equal to his master. The Superior, on hearing of his surprising progress, and having no doubt a warm corner in his heart for the bright young lad, allowed him to put off his entrance into the novitiate in order that he might have the opportunity to prepare for a Latin examination. This proved so successful that it decided in favour of admitting him to the habit.

It is the custom when postulants enter upon their novitiate that they should take another name by which henceforth they shall be known in religion, and to Joseph de Veuster was given the name of DAMIEN, that name which after his death was to flame across the world in letters of gold. The choice was taken

from the heroic doctor of Cilicia who, after a life of self-sacrifice spent in ministering to the souls and bodies of suffering humanity, was with his brother Cosmas unspeakably tortured and eventually beheaded on September 27th, A.D. 303. Scenes from their lives are found in the convent of San Marco in Florence, portrayed by the idealistic brush of Fra Angelico. They are also known by reason of being the patrons of the Medici family in Florence in the fifteenth century.

This choice of the name of Damien for the young novice of Louvain was prophetic for one who in after years was to be both Priest and doctor to those whom the world had cast off and forsaken. As he himself said, ‘It is more or less repulsive to nature always to be surrounded by these unfortunate children, but I find consolation in it ; for being now a bit of a doctor, like my patron St. Damien, I try, with the help of God, to alleviate their bodily pains and so bring them on in the way of salvation.’

Each day in after years as the young Priest at his Altar offered the Eternal Sacrifice it must have been an inspiration to repeat the name of his patron in that great roll of honour in the Canon of the Roman Liturgy beginning with ‘the glorious and ever-Virgin Mary,’ and continuing with ‘the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul’ down to ‘Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Lawrence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmas and Damian.’¹

In the form in use in Belgium the saint’s name is

¹ Not to be confused with St. Peter Damian, or *of Damian*, Cardinal Bishop of Ostia, died February 23rd, 1072, and who cherished in his disciples the spirit of solitude, charity, and humility, combined with great mortification.

written *Damien*, but in English it is spelt *Damian*, a nearer reproduction of the original Latin, *Damianus*, and the modern Italian, *Damiano*.

'Like my patron, St. Damien, I try, with the help of God, to alleviate their bodily pains and so bring them on in the way of salvation.' These words give the key to Damien's handling of the flock committed to him, the insight into the immortal soul within the suffering body, for, although it was to the bodies he so often ministered, yet it was for the souls of his people that he made the supreme sacrifice, renouncing everything that life holds dear. How often it has been written across the history of Missions that by ministry to the poor, weary body a door is opened to the secret recesses of the soul.

But this is anticipatory. It is necessary to return to the young brother in the Louvain convent. It is typical of those early days that, on one occasion after an earnest exhortation to the novices by the Father Superior on the duties of 'Silence, Recollection, and Prayer,' Damien was found to have cut the words on his desk to have them ever before his eyes — an interesting instance of attention to the preacher which it is to be hoped will not be followed too assiduously by enthusiastic choirboys.

Above all the characteristics of his novitiate is shown his wonderful capacity for prayer; a gift which he cultivated by every means in his power, not only by the use of the Daily Offices, including the Night Hours so strenuous to a novice, but by private prayer, the outpouring of his soul, the inner mystic life of the spirit in which God is not only the great Reality, but the Friend, the Guide, and the Teacher. This intense

realisation of the companionship of his Lord, fostered during those hours in the quiet convent, kneeling before the Presence, were to prove of untold blessing in the years to come, when in that lonely Isle of the Pacific his sole companions would be his leper parishioners, diseased both in body and soul. Youth, as it is trained in devotion, the art of contemplation, the memorising of Sacred Writ, little realises how these things will be prized when sickness, distance, or difficult occupations may cut the soul off from corporate worship.

The superb constitution which Damien inherited from his ancestors, sturdy sons of the soil, allowed him to go into the chapel for Adoration so early as three in the morning, continuing till the Brethren met for Mattins and meditation at 4.30 a.m. If any could have known what passed within his soul during those silent hours of the night, his ministry at Molokai might not have seemed so surprising, and much would be learnt of the work of prayer. Did he kneel like the young candidate for knighthood in John Pettie's picture of 'The Vigil,' his eyes full of steadfast faith and devotion ; did he prostrate himself with an adoration akin to the mysticism of the East ; or did he just rest, hidden in the peace of the Sacred Heart, lost in that highest communion of all ? God alone knows ! But this is certain, that in those hours when through the dark shadows the light glowed above the Altar where the Blessed Presence rested, the foundations on which Damien's life-work was built were laid.

One striking characteristic of this young man's character was the remarkable ease with which he could pass in a moment from deep devotion to study

or recreation ; from gay conversation to complete absorption in prayer – a most enviable trait to those who find concentration in worship one of the most difficult achievements of daily life, only attainable by a soul which lives very near to God.

His healthy body and love of prayer both stood him in good stead on the occasions when the Brotherhood made a pilgrimage to Montaigu, a celebrated shrine of Our Lady, nine miles from Louvain. Young Damien always made the journey both ways on foot as light-heartedly as one of St. Francis's troubadour friars, reciting the Rosary time and again. As it was the custom to communicate at the 6 a.m. Mass at the shrine, it was necessary to start from Louvain quite by midnight, and the other pilgrims retired to bed earlier than usual in preparation. It is always a melancholy procedure to start a journey at that dark, mysterious time when the day gives place to the first hour of a new morning, with all its unknown perils and possibilities. Damien, seemingly tireless, always cheerful, rarely sought his bed on these occasions, but spent the waiting time on his knees, where he was found at the time of departure, quite as bright and active as the sleepy-eyed Brothers who sought him. Truly a man of superhuman strength !

It was during the first months he spent with the Community in Louvain that a striking glimpse into his humility of soul is given. Speaking to his brother, Father Pamphile, he observed :

“ When I assist at the lectures of the University the sight of so many clever students humbles me exceedingly and covers me with shame.”

Noble, humble Damien ! The names of those his

Little Portion, the Portuincula, which his own hands had erected, Damien with the utmost difficulty being persuaded to rest upon a miserable apology for a bed flat upon the ground, in his own little house by the church he loved so dearly.

Lovely and pleasant in their lives, surely in death these two are not far divided. Perhaps in the heavenly mansions they walk even now as friends !

For twenty-one days Damien lay in agony, while gradually the familiar roar of the sea, the voices of the children, the cry of the seabirds, grew faint to his dying ears, in the same way as the dear, familiar faces grew dim to his fading eyes. Constantly united to his Lord by prayer and suffering, his sublime patience and still cheery smile were a wonder to all.

Father Wendolin asked that, like Elijah, he would leave him his mantle, that he might inherit his great heart.

"What would you do with it?" was the sick man's reply. "It is full of leprosy."

Towards the end he was continually aware of the presence of two persons in the room, unseen to those around him, one at the foot of his bed and one at the head, but he never mentioned who they were.

The second Sunday after Easter was his last earthly Sabbath, when in the Roman and Anglican Liturgies the Gospel for the Day speaks of the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. In common with Catholic Christendom, this Gospel was read in the two churches of Molokai to the accompaniment of tears and sobbing from the grief-stricken people.

kneeling before the stained glass window of Xavier in the chapel, asking that the saint might intercede for him that he too might be given the great privilege of saving souls in heathen lands.

For many years he and his brother Pamphile had loved to talk and think, and, when separated, to write to each other about the glamour of the South Sea Islands, with their sapphire seas thundering against the reefs of coral, the lovely shores like one vast bouquet of flowers, scented and glowing, the natives with their laughing faces wreathed in blossoms, requiring but the knowledge gained from Calvary to turn them into veritable sons and daughters of the Living God. Nor were the two young monks blind to the evil in those sun-swept lands — the innocent friendliness of the natives to the white whalers and merchants repaid by unspeakable cruelty and injustice, the barbarous customs that lay behind the picturesque beauty of those smiling lands, the foul diseases, the immorality, and the idleness. But to an eager youth on the threshold of life these things give but an added zest as he views the work set before him, the trampling down of these deeds of the Devil in the name of his Lord. And again and again the younger lad saw his brother's eyes sparkle as he looked forward to the time when he himself would be a shepherd of these most attractive sheep.

Damien, separated in Paris from the embryo missionary's influence, lost none of his own enthusiasm, but spoke and thought much of those lovely and alluring lands. The Father Superior, with Divine intuition, recognised the dawning call in the young novice's soul, and with earnest intentness several times

drew his attention to St. Paul's state of mind at Athens. The visits of a missionary Bishop from the South Seas to the House of the Picpus Fathers set the final seal on all these budding aspirations, so that he wrote to his parents full of enthusiasm, 'I believe this zealous missionary will shortly return to his Mission in Oceania, and may possibly take some of us with him. Would you not be happy if I were to be one?'

Shortly afterwards, on returning to Louvain, he found his brother's ardour for the work awaiting him increased a thousandfold. But God does not always call his servants to work for him in the way they choose, and it was the Divine Purpose that Father Pamphile's eyes should never rest on the enchanted islands of his dreams. A few weeks before the date on which he was to sail, typhus broke out in Louvain and the young Priest obtained permission to go into the fever-stricken homes of the city, taking the Last Sacraments to those so suddenly called to pass through the gate of death, as well as comforting the mourners and burying the dead. It was a wonderfully heroic work, and it can well be imagined that Damien's eager soul found much regret in the fact that, being as yet only in Minor Orders, it was impossible for him to administer the Sacraments in like manner, but there is no doubt his prayer-loving spirit poured out the riches of its nature in continual intercession for the suffering city.

It was but a short while before the date fixed for his departure to Honolulu that the blow fell which was to alter Father Pamphile's life-work. He who for weeks had moved amidst the most virulent infection,

heard Confessions from the lips of the dying, administered the Blessed Eucharist and Holy Unction to those *in extremis*, and all without any hurt, now fell suddenly ill with the dread disease, and lay tossing upon his bed, wasted with fever. Added to his physical sufferings, a cloud of deep depression settled down upon his ardent soul as he realised it would be impossible for him to start on his journey. Nor did it help matters when he remembered that the Picpus Fathers had already paid his passage. It was at this stage, when the young Priest was fast losing his hold on life, that his brother Damien, with that simple directness so characteristic of his personality, went into his room and, taking the poor, thin hand into his own, said quietly : "Would it help you if I went in your place ?"

The sick man's eyes lit up with an eager light as, pressing his brother's hand in return, he smiled joyfully, and from that very hour took on a new lease of life.

All letters written by the Brotherhood were supposed to be read before leaving the house, but Damien, acting for once in direct disobedience to authority, wrote to the Superior-General in Paris explaining the situation and begging that he might take his brother's place. A few days later, as the young students were seated in their classroom, the Father Superior entered, an open letter in his hand.

"Oh, you impatient boy ! You have written this letter and you are to go."

Damien the impulsive leapt from his seat and, running out of the room, leapt and danced like a young colt. One is still very much the boy, even at the mature age of twenty-three ! His fellow-students asked

each other if he were crazy, but it was a Divine madness.

The letter had ordered him to bid farewell to his parents and friends and come to Paris immediately to join in the Retreat which his fellow-missionaries, companions on the journey, were making before their departure. Damien's first thought before going home to Tremeloo was to run joyfully to his brother's bedside with the letter.

The suddenness of his departure, together with the attendant excitement, must have done much to soften the anguish of farewell. It is those who see the loved one depart and themselves remain behind amid the old familiar scenes, the daily tasks, where each inanimate object brings back memories of the absent, who suffer the most on these occasions. There are many of this generation – mothers, wives, sisters, lovers – who during the Great War bade farewell to their menfolk fearing they might never meet again, who can realise that it was Madame de Veuster who suffered the most during those last brief hours, knowing full well, in those days of difficult and expensive travel, it was probably the last time she would see her boy again on this side of the grave. For him the acuteness of the agony came later, through long years of loneliness and homesickness beneath the far-off splendour of the southern stars.

Full of confidence in the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Consolation, Damien asked his own beloved mother and a sister-in-law to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Notre-Dame at Montaigu, where he promised to see them for the last time the following morning.

Returning to Louvain, he started for Montaigu at midnight with a few companions, as so often had been his custom. The scene of his farewell is extremely touching. After long and fervent prayer, the rare tears of manhood falling fast, he folded his mother in a tender embrace, then with a simple gesture pointed to the statue of Our Lady, and with a heart overflowing with grief, yet strong with hope, went forth to his life-work and the ultimate martyr's crown, leaving his beloved parent in the care of Him who had seen a sword pierce through His own Mother's soul also.

Damien had prayed the Blessed Virgin to ask Our Lord that he might have the space of twelve years to work in His harvest. He was granted twenty-five.

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On arrival in Paris, he had his photograph taken, a quaint old-fashioned portrait staring straight out from the picture, clasping a Crucifix, the symbol of sacrifice, in much the same manner as his favourite Saint, Francis Xavier. Yet the crude portraiture is infinitely precious, for it clearly shows the open forehead and steadfast eyes, determined yet deeply affectionate, the essentially priestly face, so quickly transformed into a smile of rare charm. It is a manly countenance, typically Flemish, speaking of solid worth, strong and brave – not handsome, as the world reckons beauty, but a face commanding both love and reverence. A slight myopia necessitated the wearing of glasses, also causing a trifling disfigurement ; the plain cassock and girdle accentuate the sacredness of his calling. This portrait must have been a priceless possession to the loved ones left behind, and not less

so to those who in later years have been privileged to see the exact likeness of a Saint of their own times.

Some words written on the eve of sailing are typical of his character :

' Farewell, dear parents, farewell. Be careful always to lead a good Christian life, and never let the slightest wilful sin stain your soul. Walk in the right way. This is the last thing I ask of you ; promise it me and I shall be without fear on your behalf ; I shall look forward with confidence to seeing you again in the heavenly country. Again, farewell ; may Heaven bless your declining years — this will be my daily prayer. Farewell. . . .

‘ FATHER DAMIEN.’

The Picpus Fathers gave the name of *Père* — ‘ Father ’ — to the members of their Order even before their Ordination to the Priesthood. It is a delightfully human touch, the boyish pride in his vocation, that leads him to write ‘ Father Damien ’ instead of the more intimate ‘ Joseph Damien de Veuster ’ which characterises his later correspondence.

This letter must have brought much comfort to the sorrowing parents, and even more so the words spoken to Father Pamphile by one who had been with him for several days before he sailed : “ Your brother is a saint, a St. Aloysius ; no one can see him serve Mass without being struck by his deep devotion.”

‘ A St. Aloysius ! ’ On entering the Picpus convent at the time of his novitiate nearly five years before, his Father Superior, on watching Damien, had been reminded of the same saint, and it was a truly

prophetic instinct which likened him to the young monk of three hundred years before, whose short life of twenty-three years, noteworthy for its intense devotion, was rendered up with such joyful surrender while nursing the sick in the epidemic which swept Rome in 1591. In the margin of the Baptismal Register against his name are inscribed the words :

‘ May he be blessed, may he be pleasing to God,
may he live only for the benefit of mankind ! ’

Of Joseph Damien de Veuster at his Baptism these words might have been as truly written as of his comrade in the Communion of Saints, Aloysius Gonzaga.

In October 1863, the month dedicated to the Guardian Angels, Damien looked his last on Europe, leaving behind him the reputation voiced by his Father Superior : “ His regularity from the beginning was such that no eye, however vigilant, could ever detect a fault in him.”

CHAPTER III

A MINISTRY IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

THE voyage to Hawaii was terrible, and it was well that Damien suffered little from seasickness, that unromantic malady which has made even a Bishop remark, on returning on furlough from his far-off diocese, that one of the most comforting texts in the Scriptures is that which says of St. John's vision of the heavenly country that 'there was no more sea.'

That modern floating palace, the liner, was unknown in 1863, and Damien's ship was only a sailing-vessel, taking five months to journey on its laborious way. A terrible storm was encountered off Cape Horn, the extreme point of South America, and for several days the frail vessel was beaten unmercifully by cruel winds and fierce currents, so that it seemed impossible she would not founder. Many pieces of wreckage floating past on the seething waters gave ominous warning of the fate of other ships.

Damien and his companions, undaunted, began a novena to the Blessed Virgin Mary, a nine days' devotion for the safety of the ship, ending on the Feast of the Purification, February 2nd, 1864, the day on which in far-off Europe the snowdrops begin to lift their little heads above the frost-bound earth in readiness for the Festival of Mother Mary and her forty-day-old Son. Hardly was the novena concluded than

the roaring winds and waters abated, so that they were able to pass out of the Straits in safety. A little later they encountered another storm of twenty-four hours' duration. Damien, with his usual playful humour, wrote his brother Pamphile, remarking that the great sea they traversed was grossly misnamed, for it was the very reverse of 'Pacific.'

The little band of missionaries added much gaiety to the ship's company, for they were always merry and bright, so that Damien, writing at the beginning of the journey, remarked that after being half an hour together they were quite tired with laughing and telling funny stories. He himself was very popular with the sailors, even occasionally lending them a hand in his jolly, practical way. He had been appointed Sacristan for the voyage, and spent much time each day preparing the improvised Altar. At one time the supply of Altar Breads gave out. Damien had no proper implements for their preparation, nothing but the necessary flour, yet after several unsuccessful attempts he managed to produce them. As a server at Mass his modest demeanour and recollected devotion were an inspiration to all present.

A letter which he wrote during the voyage shows that for all the deep joy in his vocation and outward gaiety his tender heart still returned often in spirit to the little white-walled, red-roofed homestead of his childhood :

'Goodbye, dearest parents. Henceforward we shall not have the happiness of seeing one another, but we shall always be united by that tender love which we bear each for the other.'

On St. Joseph's Day, March 19th, 1864, the feast

of his patron saint, Damien first beheld the snow-capped mountains of the Hawaiian Islands gleaming with sun-kissed beauty above the banks of cloud. As the ship drew near, a veritable feast of colour unfolded like a gorgeous panorama – huge waves, blue and glorious, dashing themselves to death on the coral reefs in thunderous clouds of spray, hillsides vivid with red volcanic ash, green with tropical vegetation, threaded with silver waterfalls. Close to the land, dusky swimmers floated in the blue lagoon, real water-nymphs whose glossy hair spread round them like some strange seaweed as they sang their native melodies. Gathered on the shore, more smiling natives, their dark tresses adorned by many-coloured flowers, stood awaiting them with garlands in their hands.

On landing at Honolulu, strange, romantic name in keeping with the exotic loveliness of the scene, the missionaries proceeded straight to the Cathedral, where they heard the 9 a.m. Mass in thanksgiving for a safe voyage.

The Picpus Fathers regarded the converting of the heathen as one of the chief objects of their Order. They had been working in Hawaii for thirty-eight years, but missionary enterprise had been in progress in the island for quite seventy years, striving to counteract with its message of love and forgiveness the evil influence of white traders and whalers.

The world may scoff at the missionary, criticise his methods, tear his reputation into miserable rags, but often it has been proved that it is he and his message of the Cross that alone have saved the white man, the

aristocrat of the nations, from perils that in his blindness he has not even understood.

From the very first the warm-hearted islanders welcomed Christianity into their midst. To them, living amidst the splendour and the terror of a tropical world, where death strikes swiftly and often unseen from beneath his veil of flowers, the message of the Resurrection struck home with surpassing power.

"What!" cried an old and dusky chieftainess, as she first heard the hope of immortality. "What! Can my spirit never die? Will this poor body live again?"

It was the same rapture of the early Christians in Rome, who, amid all its pagan loveliness, wrote upon their tombs, '*Vale, atque vale'*'; but, having heard the message of life everlasting, cheerfully faced the lion, the sword, and the stake, enduring all for the hope that was set before them. There would be little questioning of the decay of religion in England if she had but recently known the despairing darkness of the heathen world.

The first American missionaries to arrive in Hawaii were welcomed enthusiastically by the king and his five wives, straight out of the sea, all six in a state of nature. The missionaries hinted delicately that things might be more in order if a little drapery were employed. The king, a real aristocrat, took the hint gracefully, and on the occasion of his next appearance arrived wearing a pair of silk stockings and a hat. The royal feasts in those days were on a truly grand scale, though perhaps not quite up to the style of a banquet at the Mansion House. Two hundred dogs were sometimes cooked to form one item on the menu,

but, as the white man seemed rather unappreciative of this delicacy, it was a favourite Hawaiian joke to put a pig's head on a roasted dog to deceive his fastidious palate. Certainly trying for the missionary, but not so alarming as the experience of his brother of those days working in Borneo, who, on receiving an invitation to a banquet, might discover somebody's head acting as a table-centre for the feast.

By the time that Damien arrived in Hawaii the royal court had improved its sense of humour, so that it was unlikely he had to endure such rich experiences. Before beginning his work as a missionary it was necessary that he should be ordained to the Priesthood, being as yet in Deacon's Orders. With this end in view, he had earnestly pursued his studies during the voyage, so that on arrival it was only necessary for him to have two months' preparation before the Bishop's hands were laid upon him in Honolulu Cathedral, admitting him to the sacred Order of Priesthood on the joyous Festival of the Holy Spirit — Whit-Sunday, 1864.

The first Mass celebrated by any young Priest after his Ordination must always be an occasion of deep awe and reverence, but those who were privileged to be present when Joseph Damien for the first time performed that greatest act of Christian worship relate that his demeanour touched every heart. He himself gives a slight glimpse into the ecstasy, the devotion, which pervaded his whole being, saying how greatly he was moved in administering that most Blessed Sacrament to men and women who perhaps earlier in life had knelt in worship before some dumb idol and

now from his young hands received the veritable Body of God, Ever-Living.

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Damien started his life-work with the strong conviction that a missionary should be a saint, a conviction which never left him. 'Kamiano,' as Kanaka, the native language of Hawaii, rendered his name, brought many natural gifts to his ministry - a robust body and constitution, a commanding presence even among that race, some of the finest inhabitants of the Pacific, a bright and cheery smile, infinitely attractive to the laughter-loving islanders, a tender and sympathetic soul, completed by a sonorous voice, giving a rich harmony to the native language, an important asset in a dialect where vowels are all-important and two consonants never come together.

Added to these gifts he brought a tireless activity, so that his people likened him to a fire or tempest. So infectious was his energy that he even inspired work in the Kanakas, those lotus-eating children of the sun.

In appearance the islanders, with their picturesque garlands of flowers and necklaces of coloured seeds, were distinguished by dark brown hair, either straight, or thick and fuzzy like their well-known grass skirts, teeth resembling pearls from their own lagoons, large and expressive eyes, with thick lips and somewhat flattened noses. The modern novel, with its comrades the cinema and the theatre, would have us believe that the young lady of the South Seas is a siren of the highest order, possessed with a particular attraction for the susceptible white man, a fascination which often has its conclusion in heart-breaking tragedy.

For his own part, Damien found the islanders a lovable, attractive race, hospitable, gentle and courteous, tender-hearted, not given to luxury or anxious to amass riches — a fertile soil on which to plant the seed of the Gospel, notwithstanding the rocky ground of superstition and idolatry, and the cruel thorns of intemperance, licentiousness, and disease, the latter too often introduced by foreigners. The white man has often taken not only the very life-blood from the native races, but has even corrupted their child-like souls, giving nothing but vices in exchange. It is curious that these vices, as well as the white man's ailments, when imbibed by the native races prove so virulent that a childish illness like measles may decimate a whole population. To the credit of the Hawaiian islander, he still remains smiling, dignified, friendly, and hospitable.

The islands are volcanic in origin, but the fires have died down on all but the principal one, Hawaii itself. The awe-inspiring sight of these mountains, with their fire and smoke silhouetted against the deep blue of the tropical night or the golden loveliness of morning, to which the Picpus Fathers referred as symbolic of the undying flames of hell, awoke in Damien's warm young heart a totally different conception. To him the fiery tongues spoke of Pentecost, and the Blessed Spirit of God turning a missionary's soul into a living volcano of zeal and devotion.

'If only Providence would send us a holy Priest like the Curé d'Ars,' he wrote, 'these stray sheep would soon be gathered in,' and in an outpouring of prayer and intercession he asked that he also might be endowed with the 'pure love of God, the ardent zeal for

the salvation of souls, with which that same saintly Curé, Blessed John Vianney, was inflamed.'

To the light-hearted Kanaka, the volcanoes are objects of peculiar terror, inhabited by supernatural beings of unknown horror and ferocity, whose activities keep the inner workings going. It is therefore not surprising that Damien found devil-worship in full swing, accompanied with its usual abuses of witch-doctors demanding vast offerings to the spirits, particularly in times of eruptions, as well as during the sinister rites connected with human sacrifices. These sacrifices of living men and women, the occasion of many cruel and bloody ceremonies, were of frequent occurrence, being judged necessary whenever a new temple was dedicated, a chief down on the sick-list, or a war to be undertaken. The awful shores of the Pacific, with their adamant cliffs of black lava, hide many secrets of almost unearthly loveliness combined with scenes of wildest terror.

Damien's parish of Puna was situated in Hawaii itself — a vast expanse of land with a widely scattered flock. His first parish is always dear to a Priest's heart. It is the place where he works out the burning enthusiasm of his soul, the soil in which the fiery instincts of youth are ripened into the maturer fruits of experience. Damien was only twenty-four, a mere boy to be entrusted with the sole cure of souls, yet it is a strange anomaly that the seclusion of the cloister often brings a wonderful knowledge of the working of human souls, and it is possible that the monk may prove as efficient a Father Confessor as the parish Priest.

One important rule to which Damien firmly adhered

in his ministrations was the practice of refusing to admit catechumens to Holy Baptism until they were really fit to be entrusted with the responsibilities and privileges of the Christian life, for, young as he was, he knew full well that among those careless islanders a relapsed Christian was as dangerous to the spiritual life of the community as a plague-infected patient would be disastrous to their physical well-being. No entreaties or pleadings would make him relax this rule — only in the case of a person grievously sick and unlikely to live did he consent to baptise as soon as he was asked.

It was a strange, picturesque life the young Priest led as he hacked his way through the tropical forests, grim, silent, and terrible, where Nature produces herself in titanic growths of huge trees wreathed with flowers, with ferns more than twice the height of a man, and every yard a tangle of vegetation for his tired feet. Often Damien must have felt desperately lonely, yet one is never less alone than when alone with God, and those hours in the steaming heat, surrounded by the overwhelming activities of Nature, taught him afresh the lesson of dependence upon his Lord.

Sometimes his way led over mountains, where the waterfalls leapt in a thousand sparkling chains of silver amid the vivid green into the lovely sea, where in the clear water fishes gay as rainbows, yellow and orange, blue and red, darted amid the snow-white coral. Close by, the groves of cocoanut and banana with broad, fan-like leaves acted as a background for the flowering trees, the hibiscus flaming with colour all the year round, the gardenias, the myrtles, and the mystic passion flowers. After a shower the whole

island gave up a fragrant incense, intense and lovely, filled with the scent of the Japanese lily and the tall spikes of the ginger.

It was a colossal task that Monseigneur Maigret, the Bishop of Honolulu, had set his young Priest, and his confidence was not abused, for Damien met every obstacle, every difficulty, every danger, not only with courage, but with actual joy.

It was not long before he met the Father of the adjoining parish of Kohala, a tract of land infinitely larger than his own, containing seven scattered churches. Damien's sympathetic eyes quickly perceived the older Priest was fast breaking down under the weight of increasing years and labour beneath the enervating, tropical sun. With his usual quick decision, the young man pressed him to allow him to exchange his smaller parish with him, a proposal to which the Bishop agreed, but even Damien's abundant energy found it difficult to run a parish which, as he wrote to Father Pamphile, was 'as large as the whole diocese of Malines,' and certainly much more difficult to manage, so that it was not long before he found it necessary to obtain helpers. The richness of his personality always attracted young men to his side, so that it was not long before he was able to find suitable Kanaka youths whom he trained as lay preachers ; then, having taught them the necessary Epistles and Gospels and initiated them into the art of singing hymns, he sent them out as his messengers, and very earnest and devoted they proved.

Yet even their zeal did not save him from much hardship and heavy toil — endless riding and tramping through the thick forests, steaming with heat like some

gigantic greenhouse, climbing rocky mountain slopes beneath the tropical sun, wrestling with superstition, idolatry, immorality, drunkenness, and disease, bearing all with a cheerful spirit, daily giving thanks for the privilege of ministering to the souls of men. Disappointments, burdens, anxieties, such as few other Priests in the island could have borne, were his daily portion, yet he continued on his way, joyful and serene, full of faith, eager for his Master's service.

One instance, typical of countless others, is recorded of Damien's hearing for the first time of a little Christian settlement far away beyond the rocky slopes at the foot of which he was riding, where the Priest had died and no substitute found. Without a moment's hesitation, Damien tethered his horse and began steadily to climb the mountain-side, scrambling from rock to rock, taking precarious hold of the ferns and grass, moving with bated breath above fearful precipices and deep chasms till at length he reached the top. There, pausing for breath, he looked down into a deep valley bounded by a second mountain. Sliding, slipping, stumbling, he made his perilous descent, then, crossing the valley, began his second wearisome climb. At the top his tired, eager eyes beheld nothing but another wide-spreading plain and a third imposing height. With weary steps, hands and feet cut and bleeding, boots worn to fragments, he crossed the valley, then, pausing, well-nigh spent, looked up at the towering rocks above him.

With parched lips he prayed for strength to carry on, then, glancing down at his wounded hands and feet, recalled the sufferings of his Lord on another

Sorrowful Way, and swiftly the deep spirituality of his nature triumphed over the poor, exhausted body, as he muttered to himself :

“ Courage, Joseph ! The good God also has shed His blood for those poor souls yonder.”

‘ Courage, Joseph ! ’ It is one of the watchwords of his career. Small wonder that the Bishop of his diocese, a man of few words, had named this new recruit ‘ The Intrepid.’

It is possible even to picture a faint smile upon his face as he began that third perilous ascent, planting his tortured feet upon the treacherous rock, clinging with his bloodstained fingers to the shrubs and ferns. Yet even his brave eyes must have feared what they might meet as at length he reached the summit. But there, at last, his faith and patience were rewarded, for unmistakably he could see a native village nestling amid the foliage.

Nor had he long to wait for his reward, that reward so dear to the heart of a Priest – the welcoming delight of souls long deprived of the Church’s ministrations, starving in spiritual destitution for need of her Sacraments. With deep gratitude these lonely Christians gave him of their best, and, showing him the pathetic grave of their dead Priest, quickly found themselves numbered among Damien’s parishioners.

To him this was no outstanding experience, but merely one of many, numbered among the countless burdens, the bitter disappointments, which every missionary Priest knows so well.

Damien’s pastoral visitations did not always entail tramping through the primeval forest or scaling precipices. Sometimes his way lay across the sea, rowed

in a boat constructed of nothing more elaborate than the hollowed-out trunk of a tree, manned by sturdy Kanakas, whose brown skins gleamed with the rich tints of copper in the vivid sunlight.

On one such occasion, as the boat sped rapidly along, a frightened rower suddenly gave vent to the age-long cry of the terrified mariner : " We perish ! "

In a fraction of time they were all in the water, the Kanakas swimming as easily as the gorgeously tinted fish moving beneath them, Damien equally securely — for he had learnt the art when quite a lad — though perhaps not quite so gracefully as his dark-skinned companions.

The party had no idea how to right the capsized boat, but they managed to propel it as they swam, and thus came safely to land. The practical side of Damien's nature is characterised by the fact that, before trusting himself and his goods to this very primitive method of transport, he made suitable preparation for any mishaps that might occur to either, by making a good act of contrition to safeguard the one and by firmly strapping the luggage to the canoe to preserve the other. By this means no damage was done, except to a little Breviary which Damien much valued, whose pages were so saturated with water as to be unreadable.

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He had been but a short time in his new parish when, with the aid of the Kanakas, he began with his own hands to build churches and chapels, and much was the amazement of his parishioners to see their Padre carrying great planks of wood from the seashore

right up to the top of the hill, planks so heavy that three or four of them could scarcely lift them from the ground.

One of his professors in the old days in Louvain University had often affectionately called him '*Mon gros Damien*' — 'My big Damien'; the name would have seemed more appropriate here, when, like St. Simon of Cyrene on another hill, he toiled up the slopes beneath the burning sun, carrying the wood upon his broad, willing shoulders.

Another story, illustrating his great strength, tells that, riding one day near the coast, he saw a small boat drifting along the shore without any guide. Hurriedly dismounting, he waded into the sea, reached the boat, and with his own unaided efforts brought it ashore. Eight helpless men — four Englishmen, three Americans, and one Dutchman — were lying exhausted within it, their hands still grasping the oars they were too feeble to use. Obliged to quit their burning ship, they had drifted, helpless and hopeless, for eight weary days. In after years, as Damien's strong young body lay sleeping in its leper's grave, it is possible that some of these men recognised the name of the young Priest who had saved them from a terrible death.

At first the young missionary included benches in his church furniture, but soon found it was a needless luxury for a congregation who much preferred to sit on mats on the floor.

His home life in Belgium had shown him that hallmark of respectability, Sunday clothes, but here the Sabbath created a more startling difference, for his parishioners, who on week-days roamed the countryside half-naked, in and out of the sea like so many

brown fish, appeared in church on the first day of the week in garments wonderful and dazzling to behold. The Kanaka, in common with all mankind, and even some of the more intelligent of the animal kingdom, hates being laughed at, and it was more than the young Padre's place was worth for his merry eyes to betray the inward mirth they found so difficult to conceal.

St. Paul speaks of the necessity for women to be soberly attired, but it is certain that in their wildest extremes of fashion the ladies of Corinth were not so distracting to the preacher as those beaming Hawaiians, clothed in every tint of the rainbow, with probably flowers of gorgeous hue in their fuzzy hair and garlanded around their necks. There was certainly no lack of the picturesque in Father Damien's first parishioners.

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Lovely, laughing, flower-strewn Hawaii, two thousand miles from the nearest mainland ! Some call it the Garden of God, and so it is ; yet, like every earthly Paradise, the serpent lies hidden beneath its luxuriant beauty, and all too soon Damien perceived its evil shape.

Years before, at Braine-le-Comte, he had heard of the dark shadow of leprosy lying over the sunny isles of the Pacific, but, just as a catastrophic disaster at the other end of the world moves us less than a murder in the next street, so the young student had given but passing interest to stories of the awful scourge, and it was not until he beheld its victims before him that he realised its horror.

In the early stages it is not always easy to single out the sufferers from among their healthy brethren, but as

the disease pursues its course the victims are usually only too obvious, with their bloated and glistening skin, eyes glazed as though with the approaching film of death, limbs decayed and swollen out of shape, features scarred so as to be almost unrecognisable.

Kindly, hospitable Hawaii was a fertile soil in which the deadly seed could plant its roots. The friendliness of the natives both to each other and to strangers even went so far as dividing the last crust, sharing the sleeping-mat, and handing the pipe from mouth to mouth ; while among the women, well-matured garments were lent and borrowed with a total disregard of every law of hygiene. And not only were these things done all day and every day, but no discrimination was made between the sick and the whole. Small wonder that leprosy spread promiscuously, as no efforts were made to segregate the victims or give any aid whatever to relieve their sufferings. Often Damien found them dying by inches amid their relatives without any medical help whatsoever, apparently entirely oblivious to the contagion they were spreading. The easy-going Hawaiian has little thought for the future, so that the necessity for prevention of the disease was never even considered. There is no need to say to a Kanaka, "Take no thought for the morrow" ; he will be very unlikely to take any even for to-day.

It was natural that under these conditions the population of the islands decreased, and as the lepers circulated freely, not only in their own districts, but wherever crowds gathered together, they became a menace to native and white man alike.

In 1865, the year after Damien's arrival, the Government awoke to the danger, and, after discussing the

matter, passed an Act decreeing banishment to all victims of the disease, regardless of sex or rank, of race or colour. The words of this decree, terse and coldly official as they sound, are numbered among some of the most tragic in history.

' . . . All lepers are required to report themselves to the Government Health Office within fourteen days from this date for inspection and final banishment to Molokai.'

The measure, wise though it was, filled the unhappy islanders with horror. Like all news, it spread with lightning rapidity from shore to shore, and its import was not long in being understood. Full well it was realised that it meant total separation from loved ones at a time when their sufferings called for the need of even more than ordinary love and tenderness. To the anguish of separation was added the knowledge that the Government was not prepared to incur expense, not even the provision of dwelling houses, so that existence would be maintained in conditions of direst misery.

No sooner was the decree published than hundreds of lepers were seized by the messengers of the Board of Health and transported to Molokai, the appointed island of exile. Some of the sufferers, realising the danger their presence presented to their dear ones, as well as to the community at large, gave themselves up to the authorities with noble self-sacrifice, others because there seemed no hope of concealment, one of the victims actually being a cousin of the reigning sovereign. In many cases the poor creatures were hidden by their friends among the labyrinthine depths of the forests or in caves on the mountain-sides. Some were

even concealed beneath the sleeping-mats in their homes when the Government inspectors were likely to arrive. By these means great numbers escaped being rounded up at the annual search, and to a certain extent the law was evaded until the year 1873, when, a new king having come to the throne, another Board of Health was appointed and the leper hunt carried out more efficiently.

Damien's tender heart, so sympathetic to all who suffered, whether in body or soul, was wrung again and again with the constant anguish of seeing the partings between the lepers and their relatives, scenes so agonised that often the healthy with dreadful entreaties begged to be allowed to go into exile with their dear ones. The thought of those already suffering the horrors of the leper island, doomed in this world never again to see the faces of those they loved, haunted the young man's mind by day and night. And far more than the realisation of their physical misery, greater even than their mental suffering, was the knowledge of their spiritual destitution, for they were utterly alone, without any Priest to administer the Sacraments or give any kind of hope or consolation. Deep down in his heart Damien began to question his own soul : was he called upon to sacrifice everything, even ultimately life itself, and offer himself as their spiritual father ; was he worthy to be called to what must prove the martyr's crown ; was he sufficiently experienced ?

Besides these questions, there was a great obstacle in the way. He was under his Bishop's orders in a large district in which few could undertake his duties — the arduous care of seven churches and their

out-lying districts. A loyal son of the Church, a monk under strict vows, Damien throughout his life rendered perfect obedience and loyalty to the Holy See, so that at the moment it seemed he could do nothing but await the course of events. Knowing the scarcity of missionaries, he reassured himself by the thought that, if it were God's will he should go, a way would be shown. In the meanwhile, he made the matter a subject of continual and earnest prayer.

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Although the surroundings of his work in that romantic land were so picturesque, the means of transport so difficult and so dangerous, the daily routine was seldom interrupted. He made regular visitations of his flock, celebrated Mass, heard Confessions, gave instructions to catechumens and young helpers, ministered to the sick and dying. Often he must have been weary both in body and soul, lonely not only with the isolation from men of his own race and colour, but lonely with that spiritual loneliness which is the lot of many a Priest, who, though the father of his people, bearing within his heart their joys and their sorrows, their sufferings and their sins, must often himself walk his own road apart. His are the words of King Henry before the Field of Agincourt :

*Upon the king ! let us our lives, our souls,
Our debts, our careful wives,
Our children, and our sins lay on the king !
We must bear all !*

One of Damien's few recreations was the sending

and receiving of letters from Belgium. Many touching stories of his people, mingled with the spiritual experiences of a Priest, found their way to Tremeloo and Louvain, delighting his parents and friends with glimpses of his old merry character, deepened by the maturity of his manhood and the urgency of his mission.

His letters must have brought strange, exotic scenes into the old farmhouse and quiet convent — pictures of scenery wild and lovely beneath the tropical sun ; of surf-riding on the great Pacific rollers, with the sound of music on sea and shore ; of torchlight fishing beneath the opal moon ; of bathers gaily singing in the starlight. Entrancing scenes, strange and bewitching, pictured in those far-off Belgian homes !

In May 1873, ten years after his arrival in Hawaii, there came an unusual break. On the neighbouring island of Maui, where flourishing sugar plantations had caused a large influx of labourers, a church had just been completed, and the Bishop of Honolulu, feeling it an important event, had summoned his clergy from the various island parishes to be present at the Dedication.

Damien, summoned from Hawaii, travelled in a sailing vessel across the channel which divided the island from Maui, past the lovely coral reefs and emerald green valleys, till, rounding the coast, he came to the settlement of Wailuku, where the new church had been built.

Among the clergy present at the Dedication were several young missionary Priests newly arrived, in whom no doubt Damien was much interested. The

service over, the Bishop took the opportunity to discuss the conditions of the various districts. In the course of the Conference the conversation turned to Molokai, the leper settlement, by that time known by the ominous title of the 'Living Graveyard.' The Bishop shook his head with deep regret. The state of things on that island of death and corruption was enough to wring the heart of any true father-in-God. At very rare intervals he had been able to send a Priest there to administer the Sacraments to the dying, but he feared even this would not be allowed again, as every year the Government conditions became more stringent. To Joseph Damien it was a distinct call, an assured answer to his prayers. With his usual simple directness, he spoke what was passing in his mind. "Monseigneur ! Here are your new missionaries. One of them could take my district. If you will be kind enough to allow it, I will go to Molokai and labour for the poor lepers, whose wretched state of bodily and spiritual misfortune has often made my heart bleed within me."

Simple words for the offer of a life's sacrifice, the certainty of a martyr's death, and such a death — not the swift passing in the arena on some Roman holiday, but the slow, agonising mortification of the flesh upon the living body, perhaps in five years, possibly in only two or three ! And of those present who heard his offer all knew and realised with a swift horror what it entailed.

These and many other thoughts must have passed through the Bishop's mind as, touched and astonished, he looked deep into his young Priest's eyes, finding there with unerring intuition that mystic knowledge of vocation which sent Francis of Assisi to turn the

world's values upside down, Joan of Arc to redeem her country's honour, Saul of Tarsus to become Paul the Apostle. It was the call of God, and the Bishop dared not withhold his consent.

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Swift to accept his acquiescence, Damien suggested he should start at once for Molokai. Fifty lepers were to leave Honolulu that evening ; there was just time for him to get back to the harbour. The Bishop, with his realisation of the Divine inspiration urging the young man onwards, could but agree, and shortly afterwards he and Damien had left the Conference and were sailing across the blue waters of the Straits, reaching Honolulu but half an hour before the steamer for Molokai was due to sail.

Damien, as member of a Religious Order, had few earthly possessions, but there was no time to collect even these, much less to bid farewell to his beloved parish, where in the nine years of his ministry he had made many friends. Just before sunset, as the air resounded with the pitiful wailings of the lepers and their dear ones, the Bishop and Priest took their places on the vessel almost unnoticed.

Leave-takings at Honolulu are always romantic and emotional. To-day, as the great ocean liners put out to sea, the strange pathos of Hawaiian voices singing songs of farewell sounds across the waves, and even the most hardened traveller, standing on deck wearing the garlands of flowers which the islanders have flung around his neck, feels tears of unwonted sadness come into his eyes. But to Monseigneur Maigret and Joseph Damien, as they left Honolulu that night in

company with that crowd of heart-broken lepers, whose misery was not assuaged by the sight of their coffins, which a foreseeing Government in those days obligingly sent to accompany them, must have felt they walked with Dante in some dreadful inferno.

It was rare indeed that among the victims sent to feed Molokai's fierce and hungry jaws there ranked a soul so courageous as Mr. Ragsdale, destined ultimately to become Governor of the grim island and a staunch friend of Father Damien. A distinguished lawyer, he voluntarily gave himself up to the authorities on discovering the deadly symptoms of leprosy upon his person, and stepped upon the fatal boat amid the other dreadful sufferers with a gardenia in his button-hole and the jaunty air of a bridegroom going forth to meet his bride. The son of an American father and a Hawaiian mother, he was a striking example that the half-caste can be made in a noble and heroic mould. All honour be to him and to his bravery !

But among Damien's fellow-passengers there was nothing but misery, human anguish in its most pitiable guise.

The boat carried another suffering cargo, a consignment of cattle, probably destined for the butcher's knife. Their plaintive cries added still more to the horrors of the night.

For a while the mourning souls on the beach watched the ship riding through a sunset glory of scarlet and gold, then, with the swift overshadowing of the tropical darkness, the vessel with its pathetic burden was seen no more.

Joseph Damien was then only thirty-three, the age

at which his Lord had set His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem, prepared for His Cross and the unknown agonies of His most amazing Passion. The disciple had heard the Divine call and was following humbly in the same Way of Sorrows.

CHAPTER IV

THE LIVING GRAVEYARD

“UNCLEAN ! Unclean ! ” The cry with its infinite burden of woe, echoing through the centuries, must have sounded in Damien’s heart with all its horror as his brave young eyes first rested upon his new parishioners.

They were gathered upon the shore to meet the ship, those endued with sufficient strength of mind and body to get there – the most pitiful collection of suffering humanity that the eyes of a Priest could gaze upon.

‘Suffering humanity ! ’ Scarcely human, many of them, with their faces so distorted and repulsive with the foul disease that they were, as Robert Louis Stevenson wrote after his visit to the island years later, a ‘ blot upon the landscape, gorgons and chimæras dire – pantomime deformations of our common manhood, such a population as only now and again surrounds us in the horror of a nightmare,’ their limbs so rotted and swollen that some crawled on all fours, while others moved only on loathsome stumps of what had once been feet and legs.

But it was not only the sad bodies that filled the young Priest’s soul with shrinking horror ; it was the bestiality, the debauchery, stamped upon the poor, disfigured faces, the hopelessness and degradation of those who had lost faith both in God and man. Only

such as he could still bear in mind that they were created to be immortal, made to be an image of the Divine eternity.

These poor creatures, whose ever-growing putrefaction was an offence to the fresh winds of the Pacific as they swept across that desolate isle, still lived, and breathed, and remembered. Remembered ! God of all mercy and compassion, what added anguish, what exquisite torture, must that remembrance have brought !

Eagerly they pressed forward to see the boat — their only link with the outside world where once they had laughed and danced, loved and worked like other men ; looking eagerly at the new victims, if perchance there might be one amongst them whom they had known in that life which now seemed so unreal, so far away. Little did they know that the tall young Priest with the courageous face and steadfast eyes was to bring them back from a state akin to the beasts that perish into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

The batch of shivering, moaning lepers having been landed, the Bishop and Damien stepped into the little boat which alone could brave Molokai's cruel rocks and surf-beaten shore and were rowed to the beach, where, after much tossing and delay, they at last stood among the throng of wretched, wondering humanity upon the island. And as he scrambled on to that inhospitable shore amid the rough, black rocks of petrified lava, Damien said to himself : "Now, Joseph, my boy, this is your life-work."

Simple words, yet they hold the very essence of Christianity.

With a voice filled with emotion, the Bishop blessed

these sad members of his flock and introduced their new shepherd, then, with a final farewell, retraced his steps over the rocks and re-embarked in the tossing boat.

The young Priest was alone with his people, alone on that island which Robert Louis Stevenson described as ‘. . . a pitiful place to visit and a hell to dwell in.’

But even those words, strong as they seem, were written long afterwards, when, in comparison with that day of 1873 when Damien landed, the island was habitable, and all that love and skilled knowledge could accomplish had been performed.

But at the time that Damien stood friendless and alone, with no shelter but that which the lepers could offer him, without even a change of linen, so hurried had been his departure, Molokai was hell indeed – hell with the lid completely removed.

Molokai Ahina – Molokai the Grey, known also as the ‘ Isle of Precipices,’ from the great walls of rock rising in places absolutely perpendicular from the sea – was a wild, weird land, volcanic in origin, with very few trees, bearing huge rocks of dense black lava, and not many flowers, haunted by the plaintive cries of the sea-birds and the brooding sense of ever-present pain and evil.

The formation of the island resembles a willow leaf, that leaf which, shivering continually, droops its head as though in perpetual mourning. From east to west a formidable range of cliffs slopes gradually from the south side of the island to a height of two to three thousand feet above the sea, ending on the north in a sheer, almost vertical, precipice, covered in places with vegetation, and carrying on its surface dangerous

little zigzag paths leading to the rough, rank grass of the plain below, where the two leper settlements are situated — Kalaupapa, at the landing-stage, and Kala-wao, three miles farther inland.

In this one spot on the island there ‘ projects into the ocean a certain triangular and rugged down, grassy, stony, windy, and rising in the midst into a hill with a dead crater ; the whole bearing to the cliff that overhangs it somewhat the same relation as a bracket to a wall.’

There was no need for man to guard the leper settlements ; Nature had attended to that, with her twofold barrier of precipitous rock and surf-ridden sea.

Six months before the arrival of the first batch of lepers in 1865, the natives living on this north side of the island sold their land to the Hawaiian Government and fled. The low stone walls dividing their plots of ground remained, as well as a few miserable, grass-thatched huts, which, filthy in themselves, were soon made unspeakably foul by the habits of their sick inmates. The hard, volcanic earth surrounding the rough settlement rapidly lost even the semblance of cultivation, quickly relapsing into a wilderness. The dying lepers were accommodated in a rough hospital till the hour when they were thrust into their waiting coffins and hurriedly buried in a hole painfully scratched by the poor maimed hands of their fellow-sufferers a foot or so below the surface.

Scanty supplies of food and clothing were sent at intervals by the Government, but even at the best of times these were quite inadequate, as well as often delayed by the heavy storms which made landing on that treacherous island quite impossible. Molokai,

beautiful in early dawn as some lovely siren hiding behind her veil of mist, is in reality a deadly harpy, luring men to destruction.

It was indeed a very different land from that fair isle of the South Seas beloved of our childhood in the pages of *The Swiss Family Robinson*, whose amenities combined the advantages of Whiteley's and Selfridge's, together with interesting replicas of the Zoo and Kew Gardens. But none of these conveniences were a feature of the 'Living Graveyard,' where over two thousand victims of leprosy had been landed since it had first become a settlement, and of whom eight hundred were still alive at the time of Father Damien's arrival. Misery, filth, despair, vice, and degradation were the only outstanding features of *Molokai Ahina*.

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It is possible to imagine that even the intrepid eyes of the young Padre gave one backward glance across the sea ere he followed his dreadful guides over the rough grass and hard boulders along the three miles to Kalawao — the sea, the lovely Pacific, fresh and clean, which now divided him for ever from the land of the living, from all that he held dear ; that sea, blue as sapphire, brilliant as turquoise, where the deep black albatross moved free as air between heaven and earth. But it would only have been for a moment that Joseph Damien looked back ; the next instant he had turned to his people with that cheery, compassionate smile which was to prove their constant joy and delight, the last thing their fading eyes beheld ere they closed in death.

The smile of a beloved face — one of God's greatest

gifts ! The Gospels record that the Incarnate Lord wept – never that He smiled. The reason is obvious ; the smile must have always been near the surface, for His eternal purpose was to bring joy to mankind, and joy is inseparable from a smile. So to His faithful followers He gives that lovely attribute of joyousness from which no worldly force can ever irrevocably separate the saints of God, that gift of which He cried aloud upon the eve of His Passion : “ Holy Father . . . that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.”

It was a tiring, dreary walk to Kalawao with that halting, miserable crowd, but, like all earthly trials, it came to an end at last, and Damien was able to see the leper settlement in all its inadequacy, its filthiness, its pitiful misery. There was no need for the words which Dante saw inscribed above the gates of hell to be emblazoned in that place of suffering and degradation : ‘ All hope abandon, ye who enter here ! ’ The very atmosphere shouted them aloud in notes strident and terrible.

The actual village consisted merely of a few grass-thatched huts roughly thrown together with branches of the castor-oil tree, in which the lepers lived huddled together, entirely regardless of age or sex. Under the stone walls left by the former native inhabitants helpless women and children, unable to find room even in the miserable shelter of the huts, had been cast out to die. Within the foul atmosphere of the huts the stronger lepers quarrelled and fought, played cards, and danced with wild contortions and absolute abandonment, increasing their frenzied excitement by copious draughts of the intoxicating ki-root beer,

roughly distilled from a plant which grew in abundance along the base of the cliffs. Morality, cleanliness, friendly feeling, even ordinary humanity, were absolutely unknown, and those who fell under the influence of the liquor forgot all sense of decency, acting like madmen and running about nude.

The slogan of the island, dinned into the young Padre's ears both in public and private, told much of the state of the colony : '*Aole kanawai ma keia wahi*' — 'In this place there is no law.'

Small wonder that he found decency, morality, cleanliness, and friendship almost non-existent. A second slogan might quite easily have been added ; it was certainly implied, if not expressed : 'Each for oneself, and the Devil take the rest.'

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That first night on the island the lepers would have made room for him in one of their wretched, evil-smelling huts, but this was more than even his courageous heart could contemplate, so, with many polite thanks, he retired from the scene of action beneath the shelter of one of the few trees which grew upon the island. Molokai has few redeeming features, but, in company with other islands of the Hawaiian group it enjoys complete freedom from snakes, that loathsome terror of the tropics, so that in this respect Damien was free from danger.

An artist has pictured him kneeling alone beneath the branches, robed in his dark cassock, a Crucifix clasped in his hands. The light of the tropical moon shows his profile, clear-cut against the deep blue of the star-lit sky, steadfast and courageous. His thoughts

on that first night seem almost too sacred for analysis, yet as he kneels there alone, with the flickering moon-light playing over his young figure and clasped hands, memory brings to mind the thought of another Figure kneeling in the light of the same moon beneath the olive-trees in dark Gethsemane, ere at the same age he faced His own bitter Passion.

One thing is certain of that long night's vigil – that Damien's courage did not utterly fail him, even though, with the increased weariness which the night hours bring to a tortured soul, the horrors he had witnessed passed through his mind, yet, noble example of that brave little race whose country for so many centuries has been the cockpit of Europe, he did not shrink from his self-imposed task.

Full well he must have realised that with his gifts of mind and body, his beautiful voice and charm of manner, he might have stood in vast cathedrals, swaying multitudes by the power of his eloquence, perhaps even have aspired to the Triple Crown and the Seat of St. Peter. Even to that exalted position his peasant birth would have been no obstacle. Yet above the loss of honours and ambitions, the praise of men and the homage of his peers, must have been the sword piercing his affectionate heart – the knowledge that never again would his mortal eyes behold those he loved with such passionate ardour. Particularly on this night the thought of his mother's grief must have overwhelmed him, for knowingly and irrevocably to wound the heart of a beloved and loving mother is one of earth's most poignant griefs. Perhaps at no time in the Passion Play of Oberammergau is the appeal of the Christus more touching than in that moment when He bids

farewell to His blessed Mother at Bethany, knowing what depths of anguish He by His own actions must cause her to endure.

Damien's affection for his home circle was a very powerful one. His companions in the days of Louvain relate that, while at dinner one Easter Sunday during his novitiate, one of their number, having received a letter from Damien's brother Pamphile, informed him of the death of his grandmother. The news had such an effect upon the affectionate boy that he changed colour and could scarcely contain himself sufficiently to remain at the table.

Yet perhaps after all—for he was but human, with humanity's natural shrinking from pain—the thought dominating every other during that lonely night beneath the pandanus-tree was the certain realisation of the fate that sooner or later the future must surely bring—the anguished torture of leprosy, the putrefaction of the living flesh, the disfigurement so loathsome that even his nearest and dearest would shrink from him—all perhaps but his mother, that loving, pious woman whom he would never dare to see again. And he was only thirty-three, gifted, full of the joy of life, sound in body and mind!

Perhaps of all the eulogy the Press awarded him after his death the *Daily News* showed the most sympathetic insight into the depths of the young Priest's sacrifice:

‘Death was not the danger to be dreaded there. Terror was the loathsome disease. Almost anyone will risk death in pursuit of some object he . . . desires. To some men, death on the battlefield would seem nothing to shrink from. But death from the most loathsome malady imagination can conceive or

observation describe — death as the result of long protracted corruption and decay — calls for the spirit of a martyr to volunteer for a death like that. Even of the leper saint, St. Finian, it is not recorded that he voluntarily became a leper for love and charity towards lepers. . . .¹

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And what came forth from those hours, that night of mental torture? Regrets, self-pity, terror for the future?

Nothing but thanksgiving for his health and strength, joy that the splendour of his young manhood could be poured forth in the service of his Lord and these His suffering children.

The longest life of a leper on that island of weeping was but five years — perhaps that was all Damien had to live — five years amid sights and sounds and scents unspeakable ; yet he came forth to live them rejoicing and giving thanks. This is the spirit which turns the world's values upside down ; this is the attribute which distinguishes the saint from his fellow, the virtue which gives to man the Vision of God. It is the echo of those great words from Corinth which ring down the centuries with ever-increasing beauty, as in every age men and women show forth their truth : ' We glory in tribulations.'

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The following morning Damien was fully launched into his life-work. The news of his heroism spread

¹ In spite of this assertion, legend tells that St. Finian took the malady of his own free will. See chapter viii.

like wildfire through the islands, and a leading Honolulu paper concluded a wonderful eulogy with these words : ‘ We care not what this man’s theology be ; he is surely a Christian hero. . . . If this is not a faithful minister of the Gospel, we do not think he is to be found in these islands. . . . ’

But Damien himself knew none of these things , the world had receded too far away ; he was occupied in providing the primary needs of humanity for his suffering people. And first to ease their unspeakably diseased and agonised bodies, and thus to reach the stifled and dying souls : ‘ His preaching much, but more his practice wrought.’ Damien himself was the living sermon.

They were filthy beyond description, those poor lepers ; far more filthy than any animal in its coat of fur. Their miserable hovels were infinitely more revolting than any wild beast’s lair. Man, whose body has been the vehicle of the Incarnation of God, can sink lower than the brutes.

Water was only obtainable by carrying it from a long distance on the poor, suffering shoulders, so that it was small wonder the lepers used very little of the precious liquid for cleansing their persons or the scanty rags which covered them. Damien’s first duty was to kneel on the ground and gird himself with a towel, even as his Lord knelt to wash the feet of peasants, and try to bring some semblance of cleanliness to the poor, evil-smelling bodies, the reeking, sickening sores – an act of sublimest heroism, not performed in one gallant moment of wild enthusiasm, but in cold reality day after day, year after year, with full knowledge of the whole loathsome procedure it entailed.

Occasionally he raises the veil from those hidden years, barricaded from the sight of the world behind Molokai's giant cliffs and dreaded scourge, but Damien, who, like Blessed Francis, had taken Holy Poverty as his Bride, crowned himself with her loveliest attribute, a gracious humility, so that it is rarely that consciously, from his own pen, the extent of his sacrifice is shown. It was from the lips of others that these things were known. Even in a letter to his dearest confidential friend and brother, Father Pamphile, describing the conditions prevailing upon the island on his first arrival, there is little mention of himself beyond the fact that often, while exercising his priestly duties in the lepers' miserable huts, he was forced to run outside for a breath of fresh air. On some of Molokai's unkind days, when an intense airlessness and oppression lay upon the land, the poor young Padre's sufferings must have been terrible.

In this connection he mentions that man's ever-ready friend and comforter, the well-seasoned pipe, was his preservation, besides saving him from carrying the nauseating odour of the sufferers in his clothes.

Robert Louis Stevenson, in speaking of his visit to Molokai after Damien's death, describes himself as no more timid than the average man, yet the sights and sounds on that sorrowful island, even after all the reforms that Damien had accomplished, caused him to state that 'life in the lazaretto is an ordeal from which the nerves of a man's spirit shrink, even as his eye quails under the light of the sun . . . a pitiful place to visit and a hell to dwell in. . . . I never recall the days and nights I spent upon that island promontory (eight days and seven nights) without

heartfelt thankfulness that I am somewhere else.

As Damien's own letter admits, often when ministering to the sufferers in their little huts the effluvium was so overpowering that for all his endurance the Priest was obliged to retire hastily outside with a sick revulsion that he was physically unable to conceal.

For all his spirituality, Damien had plenty of common sense. It is a general idea that a mystic has little knowledge of the practical necessities of everyday life. He is credited as being merely a visionary, whose soul dwells in heavenly places, but whose brain and fingers are useless to cope with such ordinary things as building and sanitation, cooking and washing, mending and making, much less the more intricate problems of organisation and government.

But that great mystic, Paul of Tarsus, besides bearing the care of all the Churches, laboured with his own hands weaving the tents of black goats' hair still used by the nomadic tribes of the desert ; Catherine of Siena, whose ecstasies have been the wonder of each succeeding generation, was practical to a degree ; Francis of Assisi, the 'glorious' St. Francis, repaired churches with his own aristocratic, unaccustomed hands.

So Damien, whose communion with his Lord was such a living reality that in a moment he could pass from light-hearted gaiety, or the most revolting task, into complete absorption in prayer, gave himself at first almost entirely to the work of bettering his people's condition, knowing full well that the way to a starved and stunted soul lies through loving ministry to the suffering body. The most devout mind cannot concentrate on the sermon if the feet are cold, or there

is a draught coming round from the vestry door.

Shelter for those same poor bodies seemed to be the most crying need, and the practical side of Damien's nature quickly realised that example was the surest means to rouse his sufferers to action. Lethargy is a prevailing symptom of leprosy, and, although in the earlier stages of the disease exercise is essential, one doctor even going so far as to say a fifteen-mile walk every day, or its equivalent in manual labour, should be undertaken, it is a superhuman task to make the patient bestir himself, even in the slightest degree. But Damien, who in his Hawaiian parish had made the healthy, ease-loving Kanakas work with a willingness which astounded every white man who observed it, now set himself the task of making that same Kanaka work when he was not only sick, but bowed to earth with spiritual deadness, outstanding vice, and moral corruption. With his own hands the Padre started to build fresh huts, and, although at first he worked alone, little by little, as he had hoped, a few of the most able-bodied lepers, fired by his example, began to assist him. Damien's experience caused him to maintain that a leper who just let himself go, and allowed the disease to do what it would, without any attempt to exercise himself, soon wore a depressed appearance and threatened to become a complete wreck.

Amidst so many necessities, the water-supply seemed the most urgent, and it caused the young reformer much anxiety to discover a means by which the existing scarceness might be remedied. It was a matter for very real rejoicing when he learned that at the end of the valley of Waihanau there was a natural

reserve which, even in times of drought, had never been known to dry up.

With his usual directness, Damien set out at once on a journey of exploration, accompanied by two white lepers and several of his boys. Great was his delight when he came to a nearly circular basin of ice-cold water at the base of the high cliff. With characteristic energy he applied to the Hawaiian Government for a set of waterpipes, which on arrival were laid by those lepers who were sufficiently able-bodied to undertake such work, thus providing a constant supply of pure water for all purposes of drinking, washing, and bathing. This system of pipes thus laid was afterwards perfected under Government auspices.

In after years some of Damien's detractors accused him of being dirty, an accusation which even Robert Louis Stevenson's wonderful *Apologia* in his 'Open Letter' does not deny. Yet this seems somewhat difficult to believe, considering the young missionary's first action on the island of Molokai was to ensure an adequate supply of water so that his parishioners might have no excuse to neglect the washing of themselves and their clothes. Moreover, it is inconceivable that if Damien had not attended to this, the most elementary law of hygiene, in his own person, he would have escaped the virulent infection of leprosy for such a long period, living as he did continually in actual contact with it.

Nor in connection with this accusation should it be forgotten that when, later on, he himself contracted leprosy, Damien took every precaution that the very few healthy persons with whom he came in contact should not receive any infection from him, and even

when, perfectly whole, he on one or two rare occasions visited Honolulu and was honoured by being a guest at the King's palace, he insisted on sleeping on the bare floor, that there might not be the slightest risk of any contamination. All these things were not the natural actions of a man with dirty habits.

It may be thought that on an island the question of personal cleanliness ought not to have presented any problem, sea water being always abundant. But conditions for the inhabitant of Molokai are very different from the merry holiday-maker at Margate or Blankenberghe. To the maimed and ailing leper the rough journey to the shore over rocks and pebbles was in many cases an impossibility, and the application of salt water to the raw wounds on his body an infliction of further misery not to be tolerated. As regards actual bathing, the amenities of Molokai do not hold out the inducements of our own comfortable resorts ; on calm days the adventurous can take a very pleasant shower-bath in the high-flung spray, but swimming is impossible owing to the fury of the waves and the unpleasant habits of the sharks who dwell therein.

Although he received some help in his work from the inhabitants, Damien realised that little good could be done in the colony until the evil of drunkenness had been thoroughly rooted out. The man who lays himself out to exterminate a vice runs the risk of immediate and permanent unpopularity. But Damien's courageous soul knew it was necessary to take the risk. Drunkenness never comes alone, and many of the lepers had sunk into a heathenism which was nothing short of devilish. Having no hope in this

world or any other, they had abandoned themselves to vice like the ungodly in the Book of Wisdom, only, poor, suffering souls, wedded to bodies one mass of putrefying corruption, left to die alone in their misery, they had more excuse than those men mentioned by the old songster, even though they persuaded themselves as these men of old :

‘ Our name shall be forgotten in time, and no man shall have our works in remembrance, and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud and shall be dispersed as a mist that is driven away with the beams of the sun. . . . Come on : let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let no flower of the spring pass by us . . . let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered. . . . ’

Only in Molokai, devil-dancing was the only flower of the spring ; ki-beer, which brought intoxicated forgetfulness, the only rosebud.

It must have called forth every atom of courage which Damien possessed to deal with this question, but he bravely set to work by going round the settlement with ‘ threats and persuasions,’ until in the end the power of his personality prevailed upon the culprits to deliver up the utensils they used for the purpose of distilling. This process having been declared illegal by the Government, some of the most guilty were convicted, but were pardoned on giving a promise never to offend again.

Unfortunately, reforms are never popular with evildoers, and Damien encountered fierce opposition, so that in bitter loneliness of mind and spirit he learnt to be hated for righteousness’ sake by those for whom he was yielding up his very life-blood. It is a tragic

example of the sin of ingratitude to know that this hatred did not cease for many years, but lay like some hidden serpent, venomous with poison, always ready to strike when most unexpected, until the hour when the news spread through Molokai—*Molokai Ahina* indeed—that Damien himself was numbered among the lepers. Then in sorrow and contrition those who had been his adversaries became his friends, anxious for willing and loving service.

Yet, in spite of the fierce opposition it aroused, the possession of the distilling instruments was a real landmark in Damien's ministry. At first he was able to accomplish little else of influence; the Kanaka temperament, combined with the natural lethargy of leprosy, was content to be idle. As usual, he himself worked unceasingly night and day, doing everything for his people, even to the sad task of burying them, and through all they watched him, unconsciously imbibing his example. ‘That best portion of a good man’s life, his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love.’¹

Often, when ministering to the dying, bending over them with eyes full of pitiful tenderness, his beautiful voice speaking words of comfort and consolation, others lying sick in the hut would hear and perhaps take heed, so that gradually the power of his character took effect and a few began to gather together to hear him speak in the open air, the place where Christianity first was preached to the sons of men abiding with their flocks by night beneath the open grandeur of the sky.

One night during the year after Damien’s arrival a

¹ Wordsworth.

fierce storm broke over the island – the south wind, the cona, so much dreaded on that terrible shore. In a very short while the miserable grass huts were soaked and wrecked, leaving their wretched inmates, in all stages of the disease, covered only with their scanty clothing and drenched to the skin, moaning and shivering upon their mats. It is not surprising that in a very few days the grass beneath these sleeping-mats emitted a most unpleasant vapour. Yet this seeming disaster was a blessing in disguise, for it provided Damien with an excellent reason for urging the Hawaiian Government to send building materials to the island without delay. The Government, which was to prove itself always open to advice or requests from Damien, responded by sending several shiploads of wooden framework and boards.

Men of all trades were among the sufferers, including several carpenters. Some had a little money, and were thus able to do their share by buying the services of their poorer brethren. Others, inspired by the example of their Padre, found ingenious, pathetic ways of supplementing each other's loss of limbs. Already the island's slogan of 'Each for himself' was being broken down. The sweet scent of raw wood, the pleasant, homely sounds of carpentering, made a tiny oasis of wholesomeness in that desert of putrefaction and misery, and with the untiring assistance of Damien's strong young arms, and under his guidance, houses grew up and were whitewashed, ground was cleared and dug, taro and sweet potato were planted, and even little flower-gardens began to make their appearance.

To the Hawaiian, flowers are the very salt of life,

and they use them unstintingly for their personal adornment, even old women of ninety being known to crown their hoary locks with wreaths of blue blossoms and vivid green leaves. The making of the tightly packed garlands which, among other purposes, are used for throwing round the necks of coming and departing guests, constitutes quite an industry. Molokai's barrenness must have been an added affliction to the inmates' beauty-loving eyes. A few wild flowers grew among the rank tropical vegetation and amid the great black rocks of lava which strewed the ground — the coarse wild ginger, with its handsome spikes of blossom ; a major convolvulus, lilac in hue ; a handsome white poppy, and a bright orange-coloured bloom with a milky stem. On the hills, generally too far off for the lepers' halting steps, the crimson-blossomed lehua were to be found, together with various prettily coloured berries, white, black, yellow, purple, and red, some of them quite good to eat. There were also magnificent ferns in various parts of the island, but on the whole it was a dreary place, devoid of the rich colouring to which the eyes of the South Sea islanders had always been accustomed.

Modern treatment of the moral effects of leprosy, so much more soul-destroying than the average disease, has shown that Damien's psychology of making the sufferer work so far as his physical strength would allow is the best remedy for the prevention of degeneration, and gardening is much encouraged in leper settlements as a very useful means of directing the patients' interest, being an employment by which the creative energies are used to a good purpose, producing results evident to their own eyes.

Having dealt with the immediate problems of housing and water supply, Damien next turned his attention to the question of provisions. Previous to his arrival, a small sailing-ship had been sent at varying intervals to the island, bringing food for the settlement. Unfortunately, this supply was always inadequate, and often on arrival the heavy seas prevented the frail little boat from landing, or even remaining near the island, so that the miserable and often starving inhabitants had the anguish of seeing it depart without disembarking its cargo.

Damien quickly petitioned the Government to send a steamer at regular intervals instead of using the obsolete method of a sailing-ship, so entirely at the caprices of the elements. The Government immediately responded, not only to his request for a steamer, but also for more adequate supplies. That these supplies were for some time confined only to common necessities is evidenced by the fact that in 1886, thirteen years after his arrival, Damien was still appealing for food. In this latter case he was asking for small luxuries — luxuries which in these days would count for urgent necessities — one being fresh milk, not one-tenth of the lepers outside the hospital having tasted it for years.

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Houses, water, food, and then clothing! The sufferings of leprosy are much increased if the patient is cold or insufficiently clad, scanty clothing being responsible for feverish symptoms, bad coughs, swelling in the face and limbs, and even lung trouble. To a person in full health, cold caused by being underclad

is a menace, but to a leper it spells certain disaster. On Damien's arrival he found that each sufferer had been receiving a few garments annually, but these were so insufficient that the whole colony was clothed in nothing but rags, entirely inadequate to meet the demands of the climate. Many of the hideous ulcers were neglected and uncovered simply from the lack of a bit of material to protect them and a morsel of salve to dress them. Small wonder that the simplest ailment carried off the victim ! At Damien's earnest request the Government provided him with materials to set up a little clothes store in each of the two villages, provided with warm cloth and flannel, also giving a money grant of six dollars a year to each leper that he might make his own purchases.

Having been thus far successful in catering for the most elementary needs of his flock, Damien set to work to remedy the appalling state of the sick. There was neither hospital, doctor, nor nurse. Bandages and lint were non-existent ; medicine, except for a few native remedies, was unknown. The only provision made for the desperately ill and dying was a shed going under the name of hospital, absolutely empty, without beds or any conveniences whatever — merely four walls and a roof. The dying leper was conveyed from his miserable hut on a cart, with his coffin beside him, and placed on the bare floor, there to await the end. The account of the horrors within those barren walls baffles all description ; it was a hell worse than the imagination of man could possibly picture.

One writer lifts the curtain for a brief instant, showing a leper child too far gone for food or drink, curled up in an awful heap of breathing corruption.

On raising the corner of the blanket, a little face is seen on which can be traced but the smallest resemblance to humanity — dark skin puffed and blackened, covered with a kind of moss, gummy and glistening, the mouth, the sweet, innocent mouth of childhood, contracted so that the teeth grin out like a skeleton, the poor little tongue between them like a thickened fig, the eyelids curled tightly back so that the inner surface and awful eyeballs, shapeless and broken like burst grapes, are exposed. . . .

Yet this picture is but an overture to the scenes of unparalleled horror which that charnel-house contained. And to such misery as this young Damien's pitying eyes had to grow accustomed during sixteen long years. Sixteen years, with nothing but lepers ! Lepers, morning, noon, and night, week in and week out, nothing but lepers ! The only reason that soul and spirit did not break down under the strain must be that, in common with other saints before him, he saw in his people the suffering form of his Lord, hearing within in his heart the Divine whisper : 'Ye did it unto Me.'

It is possible that for his own comfort he may have remembered the sweet story of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, who, seeing a leprous child cast out and forsaken in the streets, took it home and put it to bed in one of the gorgeous rooms of her own palace. Her husband, naturally a little peevish at his young wife's action, visited the child, and found, not the scarred and repulsive form of a leper lying upon the bed, but the Incarnate loveliness of the Babe of Bethlehem. And, even as the Prince bent the knee before the wondrous vision, an angelic voice cried aloud :

" Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

In season and out of season, with desperate energy Damien worked to improve the conditions of the dying, and at last was rewarded by the installation of a resident doctor and a public dispensary.

It must not be thought that the history of those early years in the leper settlement proves that the Hawaiian Government was indifferent to the needs of its suffering sons and daughters sent to rot and die in their living graveyard amid that wild waste of waters. Rather they had simply let things slide for lack of public funds, and the absence of any kind of leader in Molokai itself, who could not only stand up and boldly state what was required, but also see that funds and goods, if forthcoming, were properly distributed.

The twofold need of leadership and organisation was supplied by Damien, and the Government, quick to appreciate his usefulness, henceforth supported him. Indeed, after the accession of King Kalakaua their care and generosity for the poor exiles of Molokai were most praiseworthy. But it must never be forgotten that it was Damien who originated and inspired all their reforms.

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One of the saddest features of that dread island was the large number of friendless children – poor little leper waifs for whom it was nobody's business to care. But in the joyous, youthful Padre these little outcasts found a real father, one who not only attended to their needs, but played with them, talked to them, and withal loved them. *Molokai Ahina* had indeed taken

on a new aspect when her surf-beaten shores echoed to the voices of children raised in games and laughter.

Small wonder that as he moved about his work the young man was surrounded by a bodyguard of lads of all ages, like many a slum Priest. 'My boys,' as he always called them, were one of the few bright spots in his dreary life. And when these children, often so pitifully young, lay in their last agony, the playful, loving 'father' became the most tender of nurses, and their last earthly vision was the sight of his pitying face bending over them.

His most cherished plan was to build orphanages, one for the boys and another for the girls, and in course of time his dream came true. The two white houses grew up close to his own little cottage, so that he could still be the orphans' father and mother, teacher, Priest, and playmate. Here they were instructed in useful arts, the girls being taught needlework and similar useful employments, the boys tasks more suited to their hands.

With regard to children still living with their parents, Damien held classes in the open air until it was possible to erect a school. It is certain that under his régime these poor little ones were not unhappy. The children of leprous parents, who themselves showed no sign of the disease, were also well cared for in the Kapiolani Home at Honolulu.

The most urgent of his reforms having been carried out, Damien called upon his helpers to assist him in building two churches, one at Kalawao and the other at Kalaupapa. It is safe to say that the greater part of the building was carried out by his own hands.

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It is in the building of these two churches that one of many comparisons may be drawn between the lives and circumstances of Damien of Molokai and Francis of Assisi.

It was in the little wayside chapel of San Damiano (the saint from whom the leper Priest took his name in religion), nestling broken and forlorn among the silvery olives above the white roofs of Assisi, that Francis, as he knelt before the stone Altar, gazing at the flat, gilded Crucifix roughly painted above it, beheld the ugly, austere Figure break into the gracious form of youth and life, speaking with tender tones, bidding him set to work to build his church, which was nearly falling down. Francis, with the quick impetuosity so characteristic of himself, and of Damien also in his generation, took the Divine Call literally, and, standing in the market-place of Assisi, singing his gay troubadour songs, begged for stones to carry out the work, afterwards bearing them in a hod on his frail, aristocratic shoulders up the mountain-side, week after week, and month after month, until his hands, torn and blistered by the unaccustomed toil, had painfully built up the little shrine, and St. Damian's Altar was once more sheltered by worthy surroundings.

This work completed, the young enthusiast repaired a little chapel dedicated to St. Peter, the exact site of which is unknown, finishing his arduous task by the building up of the Portuincula, or the Chapel of St. Mary of the Little Portion, one of the holiest places in Christendom. Here, as in the chapel of San Damiano, the pilgrim can touch the veritable fabric placed in position by St. Francis's hands, those toil-worn hands which in earlier years had known nothing

harder than the tuning of a lute or the penning of a sonnet to some fair lady, yet were destined to bear the sacred Stigmata, the veritable marks of the Passion.

Of these two shrines, that of San Damiano seems to the devout lover of the saint the more nearly to speak of his presence, bringing to life the joyous enthusiasm of his amazing personality.

Damien also built churches with his own hands, both during his early ministry in Hawaii and later in Molokai, labouring with the same toil and devotion as Francis before him, save that in the latter's case he worked alone, while Damien, though undoubtedly taking the lion's share himself, was aided by his 'boys.' His hands also were destined to bear the marks of the Passion – the hideous wounds of leprosy, a Stigmata indeed.

The first church at Kalawao, built almost entirely by his own labour, was later incorporated into the larger church, so that it is possible for visitors literally to touch Damien's work in the same way that the devout pilgrim to Assisi can place his fingers upon the actual stones laid by St. Francis.

The two churches on the island of Molokai were brilliantly tinted inside to please the colour-loving islanders, the exterior being surrounded by graveyards, which filled at the average rate of a funeral each day. Few Priests have the heart-rending task of not only ministering continuously to the dying, but of burying one of their parishioners every day, often digging their graves, and even making the actual coffins. It is estimated that Damien made at least one thousand coffins on Molokai with his own hands. And this constantly, in addition to his many far more

repulsive duties, without any break or holiday whatsoever, except on the few rare occasions when he went to a neighbouring island for the purpose of making his Confession.

Nobly and completely he interpreted the words of Dr. Pusey, to an extent which that saintly man had never even visualised : ‘ Think nothing too little, nothing too low, to do lovingly for the sake of God.’

He buried the dead side by side, Roman Catholics and other Creeds alike, without any question. But, although within the sheds close by the graveyards the dread sound of nails being driven into the waiting coffins was constantly heard, he had taken away the sting of death.

Molokai Ahina – Grey Molokai – the Living Graveyard ! Yes ! But a graveyard where the spirit of peace, forerunner of the Angel of the Resurrection, was already spreading his enveloping wings.

CHAPTER V

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

THE greatest need on that island of misery was for a spiritual leader. Lack of the Gospel's refining influence had enabled vice to triumph over virtue, and those most sunk in debauchery to act as heads of the community.

It is always difficult to separate the secular from the spiritual, the ministry to the body from that of the soul, and more and more it is proved that the services of Priest and doctor are akin. To the Christian, the sending for a Priest to come to the sick-bed should be as natural as calling in the physician, and the idea that the ministry of the former is only required when the patient is apparently at death's door is a complete misunderstanding of the powers with which Christ has endowed His Church.

It is almost impossible to differentiate between the two sides of Damien's work on Molokai, but an endeavour must be made to realise his use of his priestly office, for it was as a Priest, whose heart was stirred with a deep longing to bring the Bread of Life to these lost and starving sheep, that he had sailed out from Hawaii in the crimson and gold of that tropical sunset, out into the menacing darkness, untried and unknown.

His was above all a ministry to the sick and dying, so that first and foremost he put the necessity for reconciling his people to God. He was essentially a

mediator ; one who, bearing in his own heart the continual knowledge of the Presence of God, strove always to bring all souls entrusted to him into the stream of that Divine Love. Moreover, he bore in his character three of the most precious of priestly attributes — a beautiful humility, a firm belief in the good inherent in every human soul, however deeply submerged in sin or despair, and the compelling power to bring men back to God. Browning's words might have been written of him in his ministerial character :

*Would I fain, with my impotent yearning,
Do all for this man,
And dare doubt he alone shall not help him
Who yet alone can ?*

One of his letters gives an interesting insight into this part of his labours. He relates that every morning after Mass he gave instruction in the Faith, followed by a round of visits to the sick. On entering each of the huts, he offered to hear the Confessions of the sufferers. Damien, who was such a true father to all, did not refuse temporal assistance to those who rejected his spiritual ministrations, but his big, loving heart must have grieved over those few who refused to accept his services. That he was prepared to go to the utmost limits for his people is revealed by his own words : 'I make myself a leper among the lepers, to gain all for Jesus Christ.'

With regard to those few who rejected his services, it was a repetition of the history of St. Catherine of Siena, who, after nursing a leprous old woman named Tecca at the lazarus-house of the city, was rewarded by having her honour slandered by the patient in the

most villainous manner. True, the approach of death brought the hoary old sinner to repentance, but Catherine suffered much from her maliciousness before this came to pass, besides enduring the outbreak of a suspicious eruption on her hands, which, however, entirely disappeared after the girl saint had performed the last offices for the dead leper and even buried the horrible corpse herself. Many and varied are the gifts which the saints bring into the city of God. Damien's offering was to be a life given for his friends in all the lingering horrors of a leper's death ; Catherine's sacrifice had been rendered up in another form of self-abnegation and mental anguish.

Damien speaks with conscious pride, not in himself, but in his office, giving an example of the missionary's power. Several of the younger people, all except two being Mormons or Calvinists, in common with sections of youth in every generation since the days of Cain, became discontented with their lot, feeling they were being unjustly treated by the 'powers that be,' and so attempted a revolt. The Padre merely had to show himself and make a very short speech, and the embryo rioters hung their heads and became as docile as Tommy discovered with his fingers in the jam.

In this same letter to Father Pamphile, Damien mentions that since his arrival on the island he had baptised more than two hundred persons, of whom a goodly number had passed to their rest with their white robes of Baptismal grace still fresh and beautiful. A distressing glimpse of the destitution of these poor creatures is afforded by the young Priest's remark that many were too poor even to defray any of their

funeral expenses, so that he was obliged to bury them merely wrapped in a blanket.

It is certainly beyond our imagination to visualise the horrors upon which Damien was daily obliged to gaze. No other proof is needed of his powers of endurance, both mental and physical. Only on very rare occasions does he raise for a moment the veil with which he hid his shuddering soul. ‘ . . . I have had opportunities of touching human misery with my hand under its most terrible aspect. Half the people are like living corpses, which the worms have already begun to devour ; at first internally, afterwards externally, until they make most loathsome wounds which very rarely heal. To form an idea of the effluvium, imagine what the stench of Lazarus’s tomb must have been. . . . ’

And this was the man whom a Protestant minister, presumably set apart to teach the Gospel of Christian love, living in comfort, even luxury, in lovely Honolulu, dared to criticise, to slander, and to abuse !

The author of this outrage was a Protestant minister, a certain Presbyterian named C. M. Hyde, who had never set foot in Molokai, and probably never even exchanged a word with Father Damien, although it is possible he may have just seen him pass by in the street on one of the Padre’s rare visits to Honolulu. A man of petty mind and narrow vision, there lurked at the bottom of his colossal conceit a lingering spark of conscience which in the midst of his easy-going and comfortable existence let in horrid little draughts through his enveloping mantle of self-righteousness.

The knowledge of the Roman Priest’s superb sacrifice fanned this spark to flame, but, as is so often the

case with little tin gods like Mr. Hyde, the contemplation of another's man's heroism filled his mean little soul, not with the desire of imitation, but with the consuming fires of jealousy. In his luxurious manse, which was a by-word even among the cab-drivers of Honolulu, he shuddered as he pictured himself on Damien's loathsome island, possibly wondering — oh, awful thought — whether the members of his congregation were drawing odious comparisons between himself and that low-born Popish fellow whose body lay in its leper's grave on Molokai's terrible shore.

With a pen dipped in gall, he wrote his infamous letter to his brother minister in Australia, the Rev. H. B. Gage of Sydney, accusing the dead Priest of having contracted his disease through vice and careless living, of having had no hand in the reforms which had been accomplished on the leper island, and even of taking up his work without the necessary orders from authority.

History knows no more cruel and iniquitous libel than this. But a great champion was to arise to defend the honour of Joseph Damien by means of the finest apologia known to literature. To the everlasting glory of England, to which country the departed Padre had shown such touching gratitude, this champion was a Britisher — none other than the famous author, Robert Louis Stevenson.

Picking up a newspaper some months after Mr. Hyde's letter had been written, Stevenson found that Mr. Gage had sent his 'dear' brother's epistle to the *Sydney Presbyterian*, which organ had published it in full. Once before the great English writer had heard a rumour of a slander on Damien's virtue, but the

speaker, a drunken scoundrel in a low bar on the island of Samoa, had been hounded down even by the crowd of dissolute beachcombers around him as a person entirely outside the pale. But here in black and white before Stevenson's very eyes was the full disgusting libel, and he, a man of action, who himself had visited Molokai a short while after Damien's death, immediately penned his 'Open Letter to the Rev. Dr. Hyde of Honolulu,' in which for all time he vindicated him from the accusations brought against him.

Although Stevenson had received several courtesies from Mr. Hyde for which until that moment he had been proportionately grateful, the opening words of his letter¹ give an index to the righteous anger which burned within his soul as he read the minister's infamous words.

' Your letter to the Rev. H. B. Gage is a document which in my sight, if you had filled me with bread when I was starving, if you had sat up to nurse my father when he lay a-dying, would yet absolve me from the bonds of gratitude. . . . '

One by one Stevenson treats the charges made against Damien, with that lucidity and balanced judgment which reveal his early legal training, showing their baseness, their cruelty, and their falsehood with that mastery of language of which he was so capable.

Recollecting all that had been told him on his visit to Molokai, he endeavours to be perfectly just, so that he acknowledges the faults in this ' plain, noble, human brother and father of ours ; whose imperfections are the traits of his face, by which we know him for our

¹ February 25th, 1890.

fellow, and whose martyrdom and example nothing can lessen or annul.'

Officious, he calls him, shrewd, ignorant, bigoted, rough in his ways, with no authority, domineering and indiscreet, yet possessed of great good humour, certainly of the peasant type, yet with the wonderful generosity of his caste, which, often putting to shame the wealthy, will give away its last shirt, though not without a certain amount of perfectly human grumbling.

Stevenson further refers to the bad state of the boys' home, which Damien's brother-officials called his 'Chinatown,' a name which had only brought forth the father's genial laugh. He who had been doctor, nurse, wardmaid, and dispenser for so many years alone even ventured to set himself up against the remedies of his regular rivals. Just like a naughty boy who would have his own way! But if obstinacy were one of his failings, then it is not surprising he found it hard to submit to authority, even the doctor's authority for which he himself had asked, after so long a time being his own master.

It may be thought that the above criticisms belittle Damien's work and character, seeming to bring the saint down to a very human level. But it is this very humanity which makes him so lovable, so much a man among men, a personality of our own time and generation.

And, in considering these failings as set in the midst of Robert Louis Stevenson's otherwise powerful eulogy, several points must be borne in mind. First of all, Damien was dead, and much of the author's information came from the lips of those very officials

whose little minds had been offended by the father's greatness, men who exemplify the truth of Shakespeare's sarcastic couplet :

*The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones.*

Secondly, the writer had never seen Damien at work — he had no personal knowledge of the love his people bore him, the qualities which outshone his weaknesses. Further, Robert Louis Stevenson was not a Catholic, and his mind, though it contained a far more beautiful and exalted conception of Christ than many might suspect, could never realise the intense devotion, the earnest zeal, the sublime faith that Damien kept alive by sacramental worship, and which Edward Clifford, a member of the Anglican Church, was more able to realise and record. Moreover, Stevenson's Protestant conscience shrank from much intercourse with the Roman Priests and Sisters, feeling more at home with the officials, whose religion, if they had any, did not bring terrifying thoughts of the Scarlet Woman and the Seven Hills. Indeed, he himself admits that he was a little suspicious of Catholic testimony, so that all his facts were collected from the lips of those very Protestants who had defied the father all his life. Thus he missed hearing of Damien from those who knew him best. Yet in spite of this he states that even the very story of the dead Priest's failings 'builds up the image of a man, with all his weaknesses essentially heroic, and alive with rugged honesty, generosity, and mirth.'

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Damien had great difficulty in getting used to the

foul atmosphere which surrounds a leper, more particularly when several were gathered together, this being most marked when in church. One Sunday, while at Mass, the effluvium was so overpowering he felt impelled to leave the Altar in order to be able to breathe. But swiftly to him who lived ever in the Presence of his Lord came the thought of that same Christ when the grave of Lazarus was opened, so that he was able to endure until the end. Only those who possess an acute sense of smell will realise the extent of sacrifice this demanded. After a time he grew more acclimatised, or perhaps, mercifully, his nasal faculties were dulled by continual exposure to the tainted atmosphere. Often he scarcely knew how to administer Extreme Unction to those poor sufferers whose hands and feet were nothing but raw and open wounds.

Perhaps hearing Confessions was the most trying of all, for leprosy so weakens the throat that the voice becomes almost inaudible, causing the Priest to have to bend very close to the sufferer's lips, inhaling not only the foetid breath, but also the whole atmosphere of corruption surrounding the poor decaying body. Nor is this the worst feature, for often the disease brings a sudden haemorrhage from the mouth, of a particularly offensive nature, for which the Priest must be fully prepared. The strain of concentration necessary for a Priest when hearing the Confession of an ordinary person is increased tenfold when accompanied by these terrible physical drawbacks.

It is true these details are horrible, in fact revolting, yet to understand Damien's daily life it is necessary to walk with him at least figuratively upon his sorrowful way.

Ruysbroeck, that heroic Priest of Brussels, a compatriot of Damien, of whom it was said that he went to and fro in the streets of the city 'with his mind perpetually lifted up into God,' describes in his *Book of the Twelve Béguines* the life of one who 'ministered to the world without in love and mercy : whilst inwardly abiding in simplicity, in stillness, and in utter peace.' It was only by the nearness with which he lived to his Lord that Damien was able to preserve a sane mind and a serene spirit.

Another letter, written to his beloved brother Pamphile in the far-off convent at Louvain, nearly seven years after his landing on Molokai's desolate shore, gives a slight insight into his powers of endurance and the undaunted courage with which he carried on his task. An unusually large number of his Christian parishioners had succumbed to their malady during the previous year, so that the Padre's kind eyes sorrowfully noted the empty places in the church, knowing that his own hands had been obliged to help fill the cemetery outside, where there was now barely room to dig the graves. He had buried 190 to 200 victims every year, and still there were always upwards of 700 on the island. It is possible to glimpse a little weariness, almost a trace of petulance, in the brave words of the letter as he remarks on his vexation on finding that a grave had been dug close by the large Cross in the cemetery in the exact place he had chosen for himself, and which he was able to insist should be kept for him.

Surrounded all day by sights and sounds of such unspeakable horror, at night he was quite alone in his little cottage, sole guardian of these beloved dead — the

church, cemetery, and presbytery forming one single enclosure.

Under conditions such as these it seems that a man's heart and brain must harden or break. But Damien's did neither. And yet he was so entirely alone for, apart from the barrier which their disease and degradation must of necessity erect between them, his parishioners were not of his own race, and, with but few exceptions, not even of his own colour.

Race, colour, poverty, sickness – they are no barriers in the great Brotherhood of Christ ; but to a man labouring as Damien was labouring there must at times have come the overpowering longing to clasp the hand of one who could really understand, and who thought in the same terms as himself. Friendship and love he received from his people, but not the understanding which forms the only true companionship. That is the thing which the isolated missionary most lacks, and which, if he is not careful, may wreck his life and his work – the need of companionship of one who understands. It is this spiritual loneliness, this loneliness in a crowd, which is the greatest desolation of all.

But Damien held the key which unlocked for him a companionship, a complete understanding, which alone prevented him from fleeing in horror and despair from that island of misery. From his own lips we learn the secret :

‘Without the Blessed Sacrament a position like mine would be unbearable. But as I have Our Lord always with me, I am happy, and work with ardour to procure the happiness of my dear lepers.’

His Lord always with him ! The simple faith of a

child, yet sublimest wisdom of the ages ! The knowledge of the continual indwelling Presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament – immanent and transcendent ! A letter to a loved one at home in sore distress gives the same thought – even across the world the Blessed Presence is ever the same :

‘ Here in your midst is One who can turn your sorrow into joy. Go to Him, then, who dwells in the Tabernacle. Go to Him ! He will console you.’

That was Damien’s secret – the continual walking with his Lord, finding Him first in his own appointed means of grace, then seeing Him again in his suffering ‘ little ones.’ It is the philosophy of the saints, nobly expressed in this generation by a missionary bishop¹ ere he returned to die in his far-off African diocese :

‘ You must walk with Christ, mystically present in you, through the streets of this country, and find the same Christ in the people of your cities and your villages. You cannot claim to worship Jesus in the Tabernacle if you do not pity Jesus in the slums.’

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The student of hagiology must often have been struck with the affinity in the lives of the saints. Sometimes this spiritual relationship is worked out by mystical friendship of two who in the world lived centuries apart. The tie which existed between St. Joan and her patrons, Catherine, the martyred princess of

¹ Frank Weston, Bishop of Zanzibar.

Alexandria, and Margaret, the maid of Antioch, is a well-known example ; the inspiration of the Curé d'Ars bestowed by his beloved little friend Philomena of Rome is another case in point.

An aspect of this spiritual affinity is found in the likeness of character and even certain similarity of circumstances by which saints of different centuries are bound together. In this connection it is no pretty fancy which links the life and work of Joseph Damien with that of St. Francis of Assisi in the bonds of similarity of character and achievement. Both were joyous and adventurous. Each embraced Poverty, that holy, mystic Bride, with utmost fervour, Francis entering on his life-work with literally no possession but the hair shirt which covered his nakedness, Damien without even a roof over his head.

St. Francis, the 'seraphic saint of humility,' whose lovers have ranked him next to Our Lady and St. Paul in the hierarchy of saints, took the first step in his amazing career by loving ministry to the lepers of Assisi, and perhaps of all his works of self-abnegation this should be numbered amongst the greatest, inasmuch as the mere thought of leprosy caused him to shudder with the sick repulsion only fully understood by the ultra-sensitive, a repulsion which amounted to genuine terror.

Psychologists maintain that each soul has its secret fear, a skeleton hiding in the underground recesses of the mind, prepared to spring forth and rattle its bones without any rhyme or reason. With some it may be brought forth by a thing so trivial as the soft and sinuous presence of a cat ; with others it may be the less concrete 'ghoulies and ghosties, long leggetty

beasties, and things that go bump in the night'; or it may be the terror of great heights or crowded assemblies which brings forth this nightmare feeling of unreasoning horror.

With Francis it was quite simple, direct, concrete — the terror of any contact with a leper. This was not so much the fear of contracting the disease, but the sheer physical shrinking from the sufferer and his loathsome malady.

Italy in St. Francis's day, as indeed all parts of Europe, was infested with leprosy, fostered by neglect of the most elemental laws of hygiene and the insufficiency of personal cleanliness — a far cry from the days of heathendom, when the Roman baths were the wonder of the world. The leper hospital, or lazaretto, of Assisi stood outside the gate of San Salvatore on a road which the elegant young Francis Bernardone avoided like the very plague, and his nervous horror of those who dwelt within its walls rose ever higher and higher like the tide of some inflowing sea. The crisis came with lightning-like rapidity during that period when the young noble's soul, torn hither and thither like some helpless craft at the mercy of the storm-tossed waves, was on the verge of complete collapse between the world he loved and the God he feared.

Riding one day towards Assisi after an expedition, he came to a place where the road forked. A single figure only was in sight, a leper, making his painful way along one of the two white roads. Francis's recoil was so violent that his horse reared back on its haunches, then, swerving, dashed down the other road. It was the crisis of the young man's life, and by the

grace of God he met it with startling heroism. Reining in the terrified animal, he swung him round, galloping swiftly towards the leper. Springing from the saddle, he placed an alms in the poor, dreadful hand, then, drawing himself up, looked firmly into the face eaten away with disease, and, folding the sufferer in his arms, kissed him tenderly. A strong, superhuman impulse, dictated, it might be said, by the urge of the moment ; but with Francis a thing was never done by halves, so that on the morrow he carried his heroism to a higher plane. Dressed in his richest robes, strong, graceful, young, and ardent, he went through the dreaded gateway to San Salvatore delle Paretì, the leper hospital, and, though actually shivering with horror and distaste, rang the bell.

As he stepped inside the building, the sufferers ran towards him, wild with excitement and delight. Their onrush, their nauseous presence, their revolting appearance, made the luxurious young nobleman faint with revulsion, but with a strong effort he bravely gave them of his best – his merry talk, his quick, infectious laughter, his charming smile. Handing gifts all round, he completed his visit by kissing each poor, sad hand, and from that day one of his chief labours of love was to comfort and minister to these wretched outcasts of society. A little later on, after renouncing his father's house, he went to the lazaretto at Gubbio, laughing and singing as he dressed the hideous sores of the inmates. And in due time he reaped his reward, for in future years, when all men seemed against him, one ray of light brightened the darkness of his soul, as in his inner consciousness he beheld the faces of the lepers he had befriended, and heard their voices

asserting with threefold iteration : "But *we* love you, *we* love you, *we* love you."

They are the confirmation of the words of St. Vincent de Paul, four centuries later : 'We may do what we will, but we shall never win the faith of anyone whom we want to convince unless we have shown him our love and compassion.'

Damien, though apparently possessed of no secret terror, nevertheless recoiled with all the strength of his manly health and vigour from the proximity of such loathsome suffering, yet pursued his chosen course with the same gay courage as Francis — the merry laugh, the musical voice, the tender sympathy — bridging the centuries between Assisi and Molokai, and he, equally with Francis, in this respect might be named the *Jongleur de Dieu* — 'God's Troubadour.'

Both were called upon to build up Christ's Church on earth ; Francis in a world-wide sense as a new apostle of the Cross, the Apostle of Poverty ; Damien as the saviour of the afflicted whom all others had rejected and forgotten.

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A difficulty in Damien's own spiritual life was the obstacles which lay in his fulfilment of the obligation of Confession. No brother Priest being available, it was necessary for him to go to another island. He was in perfect health ; there was no reason why he should not leave Molokai for a few hours. On the first suitable occasion, when the steamer brought a fresh batch of lepers to the settlement, Damien returned to Honolulu, and to his surprise received a very cold welcome at the office of the Board of Trade. On explaining that

every Priest was bound to make his Confession, he was told that if he returned to Molokai he must never again visit Honolulu.

With a touch of spirit, Damien replied that his one desire was to return to his people as quickly as possible, but, being a monk, he was under a vow of obedience to spiritual authorities and he could not allow the civil law to interfere with the higher law of the Church. He then suggested that if, instead of coming to Honolulu, he rowed across from Molokai to the Priest in charge of the neighbouring island of Maui, this would meet all requirements. But, in spite of the testimony to the Board of Trade of well-known doctors in the island that Priests and physicians were exempt from the rule that was binding on other men, the President would not agree to the proposal.

Damien had only returned a short while to Molokai when he received a notice stating that he must never leave it again. His life's work was there, chosen and accepted ; nothing but duty would ever call him away, even for an hour ; but he replied with righteous indignation that he must be left free to do what was right, and in course of time he received another official notice giving him permission to go where he chose at any time, so that occasionally when he desired to make his Confession he was able to cross over to Maui.

But in the meanwhile, before this order came through, Damien was compelled to undergo a spiritual ordeal, as great as befel any saint or martyr obliged to profess his Faith before a sceptical, hostile world. Monseigneur Maigret, his Bishop, on one of his tours through his island diocese, wished the captain of his steamer to put him ashore at Molokai. The captain

refused, saying such a proceeding was forbidden by Government. Disappointed, doubtless annoyed, but nothing daunted, the Bishop persuaded him to lie off the shore and signal to Damien.

Within a short while the young Priest had entered a boat and was rowed by his leper crew close to the steamer. The passengers standing by the rail watched with much interest as he drew near. In all probability their curiosity was inspired by a friendly feeling, even admiration, but for Damien it was an ordeal as searching as by fire, for the captain, still persisting in his refusal to allow the missionary on board, protested that no one on the steamer spoke French, so that Damien could make his Confession in that language and none but the Bishop would understand its import. Whether his statement were true was never known ; if any person on board that boat understood the language in which Damien spoke he mercifully kept it to himself as a sacred trust.

Only those in the habit of making their Confession can fully realise the desire for privacy in that most intimate transaction of the soul, stripped naked before its God as in the Day of Judgment, when the penitent, enumerating each transgression, confesses to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and before the whole company of Heaven, that he has sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, by his fault, his own fault, his own most grievous fault. These alone can appreciate the young Priest's deep humiliation as he knelt in the canoe amidst his Kanaka crew, with that row of strange, curious eyes closely watching from the steamer's side. It was a piece of refined cruelty, worthy of the most barbarous age. Truly, when the

Bishop, leaning over the side, still speaking in French, pronounced the words of Absolution, few Absolutions were more gladly given or more gratefully received.

There is no record that Damien himself ever mentioned this experience, but it is certain that he looked upon it as only another incident in his faithful bearing of the Cross. His attitude towards life in general is ably summed up in the sympathy he expressed later to a brother in bereavement :

‘ You have had a great trial. Dorothea’s death must have been a sore loss to you. But what would you have ? Almighty God intends to teach you not to attach yourself to the things of this world. Let us remember that it is a place of exile, and that those who die in the Lord are far happier than you or I who are left here below. Sometimes I am inclined to envy my poor sick Christians when I administer the Last Sacraments to them and bury them.’

‘ What would you have ? ’ Damien, so like an Englishman in many of his characteristics, so much so that in later years he used the language continually, betrays here his Belgian origin. It is possible to visualise the Continental gesture which would have accompanied it, so humorous, so fatalistic – the shrug of the shoulders, the stiffly-upthrown hands ; only in Damien’s case the fatalism is replaced by complete and loving surrender to the will of God.

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It was no easy task getting those drink-sodden, disease-ridden Kanakas to believe in the love of God, and surely psychology has rarely seen a greater miracle than this – that in their wretchedness and misery they

learnt to love him in return. But Damien, the peasant Priest, accomplished even this.

Some of his detractors accused him of having the mind and character of a Kanaka. Quite likely ! It is scarcely possible to live and work almost entirely alone amid an alien race for twenty-five years without absorbing some of their characteristics. But it is not necessary these characteristics should be of an evil tendency or have a degrading influence.

'A man of the peasant class !' they scoffingly called him. So, according to our lights and in spite of His descent from the royal house of David, was Jesus of Nazareth, together with many of His apostles ; so to-day are the villagers of Oberammergau, who represent His Passion with such royal and touching dignity. And what of Abraham Lincoln and Mussolini, of Joan of Arc and Martin Luther ?

Much is said in these days of the evils of a Priesthood recruited from any class which is lower in the scale of society than that which, for want of a better term, is styled 'gentleman.' Damien was not a 'gentleman' as the world understands the title, but he was one of that company which, including carpenters, fishermen, slave-girls, and harlots, ranks among the highest aristocracy of Heaven.

Doubtless there is much to be said in support of heredity — *noblesse oblige* certainly counts for something, and can be an important aid in the building of the Christian character, and it is also sadly true that courtesy is not always the attribute of a Priest. Yet, looking at Damien, son of the soil and the plough, it seems that the crux of the whole matter lies in this ; that where there is a true vocation, inspired by the

Holy Spirit of God, there is the faithful Priest, and there only, whether he be prince or ploughboy.

St. John Berchmans, the young Belgian mystic, native of Diest, near Louvain, but a few miles from Tremeloo, Damien's birthplace three centuries later, was the son of a shoemaker. From infancy his vocation was unmistakable. The story of his early years in that quiet Flemish home is very similar to that of the hero of Molokai — the love of his Church, the gradual dawning of the knowledge that he was called to the religious life, the opposition this decision aroused, the breaking down of all barriers. Even the characters of these two sons of the people, so nearly related in early circumstances, are very similar — the great devotion combined with exceeding joyousness of heart, the purity of outlook, the robust health, both of body and soul, the simplicity, the frank and high-spirited manner.

In passing, it is interesting to note that two incidents in St. John Berchmans's life link him with Damien. It was on the River Dyle that the latter, while skating, came close to death as an abyss suddenly opened beneath his feet. Beside the same river the young St. John Berchmans, while teaching a dog to swim and retrieve for his master — one of the Canons of Malines — and watching the animal's untiring obedience, took the lesson to heart by realising that his soul should be equally attentive, responsive, and eager to every call from God.

Damien, when studying at Louvain, was very zealous in making pilgrimages to Our Lady of Mont-aigu, and it was here that he bade his last farewell to his mother and friends before setting forth for Hawaii.

St. John Berchmans had been an equally earnest lover of this shrine, to which he made devout pilgrimage, and at one time, having given a third part of his pocket-money to the poor, he gave the other two-thirds for Masses to be said at Our Lady of Montaigne and also at St. Peter's, Louvain, now, alas, destroyed, but which must have been equally familiar to Damien.

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It has been seen that Damien's congregation, beginning with those who overheard his ministrations to their dying relations, gradually extended to increasing numbers, who gathered to hear him in the open air, till eventually two churches were built where the Sacraments were administered and other services held.

On first arriving on the island, Damien had found a tiny wooden oratory dedicated to St. Philomena, the child martyr of Rome whose memory proved such an inspiration to the Curé d'Ars that he named her the 'Princess of Heaven.' It is interesting to note that in his turn the saintly Curé was to prove patron and example to Damien. The tomb in the Catacomb of St. Priscilla where little Philomena's body lay, a phial of its own life-blood beside it, bore the touching words :

Pax Tecum, Filumena.
(Peace to thee, dearly beloved.)

This little wooden oratory to her memory on Molokai was succeeded a little later by a hut sixteen feet long and ten wide built with materials supplied by subscriptions from the white population of Honolulu.

With infinite pains Damien trained his choir and

little band of servers, a task requiring endless patience and continual renewals, as one by one the members of the little group disappeared and were laid to rest in the ever-hungry churchyard outside. It is pathetic to record that, although many of these children learnt to sing really beautifully, yet, in consequence of the continual deaths and outbreaks of chest and throat troubles, Damien very soon lost them, so that it was with considerable difficulty he kept the choir going.

He even managed to institute a band, a tremendous joy to that music-loving race, composed mainly of flutes formed from old oilcans by Damien's own nimble fingers, accompanied by drums, and capable of performing quite stirring melodies, even aspiring to the romantic heights of serenading the very few visitors whom Government business forced to dare Molokai's sinister shores.

As regards the congregation in church, it was a great delight to those poor souls who, cradled in melodies, found their haunting folk-songs of happier days so difficult to sing with their poor husky throats, to hear the clear, musical voice of their young Priest chanting at the Altar, surrounded by his servers in their simple white cottas, with the light lingering on the vividly tinted walls and richly wrought golden vessels sent to Kalawao by the Superior of St. Roch in Paris. Paris and Molokai ! It was a far-off cry ! But it was the same Eucharist, the same Blessed Presence !

To Damien it was not only a joy, but a privilege, to be allowed to lead the worship of these sorely afflicted ones — dying men and women, boys and girls — a congregation with infinite pathos and wonderful possibilities. And these lepers were fervent in their

worship, fervent in spite of all their previous degradation. The Kanaka, when faithfully instructed, makes an excellent churchman, and the leper of all men is the most ready and willing to receive the Word of Christ. These poor souls needed but to have their physical conditions made durable and a leader whose life, as well as his teaching, would show the better way, and the majority gladly and willingly followed.

The procession of the Blessed Sacrament was specially touching, with children scattering flowers on the way, the Sacred Host borne under its canopy, the mutilated bodies and poor afflicted limbs dragging and crawling along, sometimes on all fours, over the coloured blossoms in the dust of the road, joining with all the strength and devotion they possessed in the act of adoration. It was a scene which filled Damien's heart with mingled joy and sorrow, as, still healthy and vigorous himself, he bore the Blessed Sacrament in his hands, passing in royal triumph through that crowd of anguished worshippers.

Regular and devout in their Communions, these poor afflicted souls endeavoured to carry out in their daily life the teaching they received at the Altar, trying to serve one another in return for the benefits they had received. One touching fruit of their devotion was the establishment in 1879, only six years after Damien's arrival among them, of a Guild of perpetual Adoration, a chain of praise and intercession in expiation of their own sins and those of the world outside. Especially dear to the Sacred Heart of their Lord must have been this guild of such 'brave poor things.' Damien says of them with affectionate pride, 'My lepers are very fervent. They fill the churches from morning till

night, and pour forth their prayers to God with an ardour that would make some religious blush.'

Another fruit of this revival of religion was shown by increased reverence to the dead. No longer were they thrown into a shallow grave like some unwanted dog whose carcase polluted the air, but every funeral bell sounded the joyous release of a soul from the miserable earthly tabernacle, so that the chanting of the Burial Office became a song of triumph. Damien loved to tell his beads in the cemetery, meditating meanwhile on the happiness his one-time suffering children were now enjoying.

It was very seldom the father was found alone. Young and old alike continually surrounded him. On the rare occasions when he had a little leisure, he devoted himself to his two hobbies, the growing of a few flowers and the feeding of his fowls. The leper children loved to watch him scatter the corn, calling the birds with a special cry which they recognised immediately. Fluttering round him, with the queer little gurgles of delight peculiar to their kind, they would settle on his arms, his shoulders, even his head, eating from his hands. The Priest who had played with the lambs in his childhood and healed the widow's sick cow in his early boyhood was still passionately attached to all dumb creatures, so that his fowls were particularly dear to him. Yet he who shared everything with his suffering people even gave up his pets to feed the sick when their need was urgent.

Those who smile indulgently over the story of St. Francis preaching to the birds in the woods around Assisi can well picture this second St. Francis with his feathered friends about him, his dress old and shabby,

his hair tumbled like a playful boy, his hands, those faithful hands, that had toiled unceasingly for his people, stained and hardened, and on his face the clear colour of health and wholesomeness, the soft curves of youth giving place to the fine, beautiful lines cut by the ever-ready sympathy, the infectious, ringing laugh, the loving, uplifting smile. His was a character which, while acquiring the manly virtues, possessed the buoyant secret of perpetual youth.

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There were few scenic attractions on the island of Molokai, with the exception of the great cliffs with their thunderous cataracts and sundered tops where the rainbows played amid the high-flung spray. But, even if the hard-worked Padre had had any time or energy for walking tours, the going in that boulder-strewn, precipitous land would have taken away all pleasure from the adventure. Moreover, danger lurked beside the great black rocks of lava — yawning pitfalls covered by tall, delicate grass, growing so closely it was impossible to see the hidden peril.

One weird and sinister spot existed half-way between the two leper villages — a veritable witches' encampment. Situated on a low hill, the crater of an extinct volcano, it consisted of a perfect cup-like hole, 130 feet wide, said to be unfathomable in depth. Its turgid green waters, guarded by half-skeleton trees and the uncanny forms of big cacti, fittingly symbolised the horrors of that island of which it might have been the crown.

For six weeks from his arrival on Molokai Damien

lived beneath his palm-tree, sleeping each night under its friendly branches. At the end of that time he was able to put together a small shelter, and eventually was the proud possessor of a little house, two-storied, with a small verandah round which he delighted to train a sweet-scented honeysuckle.

Meanwhile, in sunny, smiling Honolulu many kind thoughts were turned towards him, and he was much cheered to receive a letter (signed chiefly by Protestant residents) accompanying a purse of money for his work. The sympathetic Mother of the Honolulu Sisters, who had charge of the hospital to which doubtful cases were sent on probation before being doomed to banishment to Molokai, was also most helpful in raising contributions for his charities.

Gifts and kindnesses for his people Damien always welcomed with touching gratitude, but any publicity with regard to himself he deprecated with the humility of the truly great, so that he was seriously distressed, three years after his arrival in Molokai, to discover that one of his letters had been printed in the *Annales*. With much earnestness he begged that this should not happen again, as the effect of the letter had been that he had been talked about on all sides, even in America, and it was his express wish to be quite unknown to the world.

Damien lived with the utmost simplicity, taking but two meals a day, at morning and evening – the first consisting of rice, meat, coffee, and biscuits, the second composed of anything left over from the morning, with the addition of a cup of tea and possibly eggs from his poultry yard. It was a monotonous diet, apart from its frugality, and Damien enjoyed, with the

relish of a schoolboy sampling mother's tuck-box, the packet of raisins brought to the island by his English friend, Edward Clifford, on his one memorable visit.

Towards the end of his ministry the colony's food-supply was in complete working order, each leper receiving five pounds of fresh beef every week, together with milk, poi, and biscuits. In addition, a general shop supplied tinned fruits and similar delicacies.

Poi, the favourite food of the Kanaka, is made from the root of the taro, a member of the arum family, which grows in rich profusion in the Hawaiian islands. The food is prepared by being ground, mixed with paste, and allowed to ferment. Europeans, finding it too fearful and wonderful for their liking, decide that it demands an acquired taste to be appreciated.

In spite of Damien's simplicity of life and dislike of publicity, his light was not one that could be altogether hidden under a bushel, although in his lifetime he himself knew little recognition of his labours, but in 1878, five years after his landing, he was visited by a Committee from Honolulu, being honoured three years later with a visit from the reigning house of Hawaii in the persons of the Queen Regent and the heiress apparent, Princess Liliuokilani. The latter was so impressed with all she saw that she afterwards wrote long accounts of her experiences. These visits certainly did good in improving the food-supplies to the island, although for some time provisions still remained scanty, and no doctor, nurse, or hospital was provided ; Damien's only helper in any medical attentions to his sick being a European doctor, himself a leper. Some time was still to elapse before their heroic efforts were to be supplemented by a resident

physician and the benefit of a properly equipped hospital.

Damien had been eight years on Molokai when news came from Honolulu that, by order of the King, the Bishop was making a formal visit to the settlement. It was a wild, gusty day, with the spray beating high upon the rocks and the seabirds screaming with weird notes above the tempest. But if Nature were in an unkind mood, the lepers determined to be festive. With joyful anticipation they prepared wreaths and garlands, those charming ropes of flowers possibly grown in their own little plots under Damien's supervision, which they had learned to weave and love in that old life now gone from them for ever.

On this day at least they wasted no time in useless regrets, and all who could walk, or even crawl, turned out to greet their father-in-God. The band waited in the foreground, watching for the procession to make its way down the precipitous zigzag path from the south side of the island. This was a very much longer route than from Kalaupapa, but, owing to the tempestuous seas, it was found to be much safer for the Bishop's landing.

As the figures, dwarfed by distance, appeared on the skyline, hoarse cheers and cries of welcome mingled with songs went up from the poor, afflicted throats, continuing all through the precipitous descent and the moving of the procession through the plain, the Bishop leading, bursting into wild delight as, reaching Kalawao, he stretched out his hands to Damien, hanging round his neck the glittering Cross of Knight Commander of the King. A deep and moving silence followed as he said with suitable impressiveness : "I

am commanded by his Majesty to place upon your neck this testimonial of his esteem."

It is reported that Damien tried to remove the handsome ornament, and only the Bishop's express command prevailed upon him to wear it throughout the day. It is typical of his character that some time later the decoration was discovered in his room with the dust thick upon its case. On being gently reprimanded for valuing it so little, he answered with quick decisiveness : "I did not come to Molokai for this."

Yet, in spite of his aversion to any outward demonstration of his popularity, the cheers of the lepers as the jewel was hung upon his breast must have been very dear to his heart, showing that these poor souls for whom he was giving his life were as happy as circumstances permitted.

It is suitable here to remark that in thinking of Damien's heroism many noble souls work unknown and comparatively unrewarded amid the horrid sights and sounds of cancer hospitals and mental homes, and all honour should be accorded to their sacrifices. Yet these have their hours and days off duty, and the way of entire escape is always open, but Damien with his own hands, those toil-worn hands which some were wont to deplore, direct inheritance of the Man of Galilee, shut irrevocably the doors of his own sepulchre.

His idealism was too lofty, his strength of will, which imposed upon the lepers a standard of conduct higher than his fellow-workers, too powerful for some of his brother officials who in course of time acted on the island for the Government. Men of petty minds, narrow in vision and in outlook, are always prepared to criticise those greater than themselves, seeming to see

in their fellows the very faults which blaze forth in their own characters. These men, when, after Damien's death, Robert Louis Stevenson visited Molokai, condemned the departed Priest, his social methods, his character, even his orphanages, saying of the latter that they were ill-managed, overcrowded, and badly kept. It would be interesting to know whether, if these officials had landed on the island in Damien's place over sixteen years before, they would have done any better, or whether, as is far more likely, they would have rapidly taken their sensitive souls and refined persons as far from that living graveyard as it was possible to flee.

In speaking of the character of Father Damien, the biographer is tempted to fall into the snare which so easily besets the feet of those who set out to write the lives of the saints — the tendency to depict them as superhuman, without stain or blemish. Yet, though such spiritual giants, they are still mortal, and their very sanctity depends upon the overcoming of those passions to which all men are subject. Damien would have been the first to declare himself, in company with St. Paul, the chief of sinners. But it is those very faults — who among us can bear to point the finger of scorn and call them sins? — which make him so human, so lovable. Here was no solitary mystic, cold and austere, dwelling apart from humanity and its needs, but a man, like unto other men, warm-hearted and passionate.

Some found his manner brusque, with the curt, matter-of-fact dealing of the peasant ; others even named him ignorant, as the world accounts knowledge, in spite of his studies in the University of Louvain ; but, however this may have been, his was the wisdom

of the childlike heart, the sublime faith which removes mountains of sin and error. The student of sociology may decry his methods, but in reviewing the work he accomplished on Molokai in the ten years he laboured single-handed and the six years which followed, even the most critical cannot fail to be impressed by its amazing extent. And added to his own personal achievements, his power of organisation, and his religious enthusiasm were the added gifts of the strength for heavy toil and the power of compelling others to do their share. Those years on the grey shores of Molokai fully justified his earlier name of 'Damien the Intrepid.' It must also be borne in mind that for the greater part of his ministry he worked alone. True, as he says himself, he 'had his Lord always with him,' but his spirit, with its human limitations, must have often longed for the companionship of a brother Priest in whom to confide and from whom to receive counsel and advice, together with the Absolution for which he longed, and which under existing circumstances was so difficult to obtain.

As time went on it became almost too great a strain even for his abundant energy and magnificent physique to travel each Sunday to and fro over the rough plain between the settlements in order to conduct the services in both churches morning and evening, in addition to catechising the children and the daily ministrations to the sick and dying. It came as a welcome relief when in 1878 Father André arrived upon the island to assist him at Kalaupapa. There is no record how long he stayed, but Damien was again working quite alone in the spring of 1881.

Another Priest, Father Montiton, made his appearance

in 1882. During the last years of Damien's life his labours were cheered by a full staff, all zealous, heroic, and devoted — two priests, Father Conradi and Father Wendolin; two lay workers, Brother James, a tall, powerfully built Irishman who was to prove the sick Padre's devoted nurse, and Brother Joseph, an American; and three Franciscan Sisters, the Superior being Mother Marianne, a woman of great charm and ability, whose love of art and beauty must have been offended on that island of horror every passing hour. Brother Joseph, the American, had an interesting history. An ex-army officer, he had been converted to the Roman Catholic Faith, and, in gratitude for the spiritual solace he received, had devoted his life to the service of lepers. A fitting personality later to stand beside the deathbed of the dying Priest of Molokai!

All three of the Fathers were on affectionate, even playful, terms with their people, bearing with them the atmosphere of joyousness and laughter so typical of Damien's ministry. There was also the sorely needed resident doctor, besides one other missionary, a Protestant native whose wife was a leper.

Damien, ever zealous for the Faith, serving his Church with unquestioning loyalty and obedience, naturally sought diligently to bring his flock into that Fold of which he was so devoted a shepherd, but, though often successful, he always showed true charity when dealing with those whose views he considered erroneous, another proof of the large-heartedness of his nature. He was father to them all, irrespective of age or rank, of sex or Creed.

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Dr. S. R. Gardiner, the historian, wrote of St. Francis of Assisi that it was not so much his humility which distinguished him, but that 'not only all human beings but all created things were dear to him.' The same might be said of Damien, and it has been seen that even St. Francis's love of the birds has its counterpart in the story of the Padre of Molokai — St. Francis as art loves to portray him, with birds clustering at his feet, resting on his hands and shoulders, hovering over his head ; Damien with his pet chickens hurrying at his call, alighting on his person, clucking gaily around him. St. Francis taming the fierce wolf, and gathering all the little furry inmates of the forest around him, has his echo in the 'Little Shepherd' who in his boyhood spent a whole night alone in the cattle-shed tending a neighbour's ailing cow.

The joyousness of the Franciscan Gospel has its natural complement in Damien's constant gaiety — a spontaneous happiness which is so lacking in many Christian souls, whose gloom repels men from their Faith, instead of acting as a magnet to draw the inmates of this world into the Kingdom of God. The attitude of a 'miserable sinner' so 'enjoyed' by many a truly devout person would not have saved the Middle Ages from disaster, any more than it would have brought one leper on Molokai to repentance.

Among other gifts which the refined Francis Bernardone shared with the bourgeois Joseph de Veuster was that of song. Accounts of the rich young voice of Francis, rivalling the song of the birds in the olive-clad hillsides of Assisi, the chanting of Damien as he led his people in worship on the wind-swept isle of the Pacific create the wish that a record might have

been kept of the sounds, as is possible in these days of scientific wonders, that this generation might have heard the veritable voices of the saints. Yet perhaps it is as well this is not possible. The voices to this generation might even prove disappointing, for there are fashions in music as in everything else, and it would have been a sad story indeed if these had proved as unsatisfactory as the portraits of many popular authors. It is fitting that a certain mystery should surround the personalities of the saints.

CHAPTER VI

THE VIA DOLOROSA

TWELVE years had passed since Father Damien first set foot on the desolate shores of Molokai, that living graveyard where the wailing cries of the seabirds formed the melancholy orchestra, ere the curtain was lifted from that island of mystery, and the young Priest's heroic eyes beheld the leper colony in all its mournful corruption, its awful destitution.

They had been twelve wonderful years, months and days in which that desolate land had literally been made to blossom like the rose and the hearts of men and women, to whom formerly God and humanity alike had seemed to turn a deaf ear, now rested in comparative happiness, secure in the knowledge that love and tenderness would be theirs while life should last, and that beyond the grave and gate of death there awaited the certainty of a joyful resurrection.

Often as Father Damien stood on the verandah of his tiny house, where the sweet-scented honeysuckle hung around him in a lovely frame of leaf and blossom, he must have wondered deep in his soul how long his work would continue before he too would be laid to rest in the little graveyard beneath the palm-tree, which had been his only shelter during his first six weeks on that island of misery.

Five years is the usual limit of time in which the dreaded scourge of leprosy shows itself, and the fact

that Father Damien had gone unscathed for twelve years of constant ministrations both to the souls and bodies of these stricken people, in closest contact with every foul and revolting aspect of the disease, led many to believe he would escape altogether. But it was not to be so, for God had called this His faithful servant to the supremest point of sacrifice, the giving up even of life itself — Joseph Damien was destined to wear the martyr's crown. In the year 1884 he suspected that the disease had begun its dread work in him, but the doctor, perhaps bearing the general belief that he would escape, or, even more likely, blinded by his love for him, refused to believe it.

The following year the thing was a certainty. Returning from one of his rare visits to his old parish in Hawaii, he felt ill and tired, sensations which to his healthy body and superb constitution were practically unknown.

Lovely, laughing Hawaii, flower-strewn, sweet-scented land, set like a jewel of Heaven in its sapphire seas ! It was the last time that Damien's eyes would ever kindle at its beauty or his soul rejoice in its light and colour. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

On reaching Molokai, while preparing a bath, thinking to ease his weariness, the boiling water ran suddenly over his foot. The Priest sprang back, then stood staring at his naked limb, a quick throb of horror at his heart — he could not feel the slightest pain from the scalding liquid ! Too well he knew what it meant — he was a leper, doomed to certain death. He had entered the long Way of Sorrows, and from henceforth would bear his cross, following his Crucified Lord to the Hill of Calvary.

The doctor's voice trembled with emotion as, a few hours later, he was forced to give the verdict : " I cannot bear to tell you, but what you say is true."

The Priest's answer came calm and serene : " It is no shock to me, for I have long felt sure of it."

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To some minds the fact that as a reward for all his heroism and self-sacrifice Damien fell a victim to leprosy, and that he who meant so much to his afflicted flock was allowed to contract their foul disease, suffering through four long and agonising years, raises the whole problem of pain and disease. It is the old poignant cry, echoing through the centuries : " Why, oh, why, should this man suffer ? "

Surely one explanation is that Damien might be an even more efficient example of the suffering Christ, that in his own body he could point to the wounds of the Cross, teaching his fellow-sufferers to unite their pain with the supreme sacrifice of Calvary, showing that the highest earthly privilege, and one which the world least understands, is that of being conformed into the Passion of Christ, in sharing with Him in that mystery that the human mind cannot yet comprehend — the wonder of the world's redemption, won through supreme and awful sacrifice.

Christianity, the one true and final revelation of God, is the only religion in which the Deity suffers. In other faiths, the gods are said to have come to earth in the likeness of men — even the babe on his mother's knee is not unknown in heathen worship. Sometimes these gods have been claimed to appear for the good of humanity, more often for its ill, or the mere gratification

of their very human passions. Nowhere is there to be found the nakedness, the shame, the self-abnegation of a Cross. The gods when on earth move more in the select atmospheres of Courts and the opulence of Wall Street. Not one of them is known as the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief ; a *Via Dolorosa* is entirely unfamiliar. Again and again the educated Indian urges that it is impossible for Christ to have been the Son of God, as He did not save Himself.

'Our Krishna,' writes one Hindu student, 'is greater than your Christ, for he killed his enemies, whilst Christ was killed by His.'

It is for Christ, and Christ alone, to show His followers that only by the Cross and Passion is it possible to attain unto the glory of the Resurrection.

Ignatius, that grand old saint of over four score years, as he was dragged on his way from Antioch to the Colosseum, there to be thrown to the lions to make a spectacle for the glutted eyes of Rome, cried aloud with joyous voice : "Now at last I begin to be a disciple ! "

This is the key to the mysterious words of St. Paul :

'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church.'

It is the glorious promise that all pain, if united to the sacrifice of Calvary, has its part in the redemption of mankind.

With regard to Damien's suffering, it may further be said that it was for the good of posterity. His death, far more than even his life, caused a world-wide interest in the curse of leprosy ; it was a beginning of that wonderful ministry to these outcast and afflicted ones which is such an important part of medical mission work to-day. The power of Joseph Damien is greater in death than in life, a proof that pain and suffering must be viewed, not by our little knowledge of finite things, but in the broad expanse of God's immortality and His eternal purpose. A surgical operation in one of our great London hospitals, viewed by the eyes of a raw African native, would appear barbarous in the extreme, but to our more enlightened intelligence it is a necessary and merciful stage in the process of healing disease, and often the only means of saving a precious life. So perhaps all pain, which seen by us appears so horrible and uncalled for, when viewed in the perspective of God's infinite love and purpose is a necessary, merciful stage in man's regeneration.

"And of Damien, stricken, suffering Damien, it is written in the Book of Life : ' Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . thy name liveth for evermore.'

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Never in all his devoted life did the beauty of Damien's character shine forth more radiantly than during the years of anguish that followed. He spoke no longer of 'my brethren,' but 'we lepers,' now nearer and dearer even than before, seeing they had been bought with such a price, and that constantly he perceived in them the picture of his suffering Lord.

His appeal to them must have had an added force of intense pathos each time he numbered himself among them, yet with splendid courage he declared that, if the price of a cure meant leaving the island and his work, he preferred to remain among his people — ‘ Almighty God knows what is best for my sanctification, and with that conviction I say daily a good “ Thy will be done.” . . . People pity me and think me unfortunate, but I think myself the happiest of missionaries.’

The sad news could not be concealed, so that, as his suffering people saw his beloved face with its continual humorous, tender smile, they knew they must watch his gradual decline and death. Yet, though with St. Paul, the greatest of all missionaries, he was able to say, “ I die daily,” he never lost his sunny cheerfulness, nor did he cease his works of mercy.

With heroic surrender he summed up the purpose for which he believed he had been called upon to suffer : ‘ . . . The sacrifice of my health, which our good God has deigned to accept that He may render my ministry among the lepers more fruitful, appears after all very insignificant and even pleasant for me who dares to say with St. Paul : “ I am dead, and my life is hidden with Christ in God.” ’

It was natural that his bodily strength should fail, and he whose activity had been so wonderful now had to choose what was in his power to do and leave the rest, one of the hardest tasks that can be imposed on an active mind and body. A new church was in course of erection, and he toiled bravely among the other lepers, as pathetically and nobly as any there, but the loving eyes which watched him saw the once splendid limbs failing, the dear, bright face changing.

During the early stages of the disease he found some relief from the Japanese treatment and baths which by that time were being utilised for the public good in the excellent bathrooms now provided by Government, but it was powerless to check the general insidious progress of the malady. Just at this time the Hawaiian authorities commissioned him to build a large hospital for seven hundred lepers to be treated entirely under his direction. For the last time he was to be architect, Priest, and doctor.

Two Priests had lately come to aid him. One, Father Conradi, lived on the ground floor of Damien's own little house, he himself taking the upper floor, and, as an added precaution, having his meals in a separate room. There was no fear that the sick Priest would injure his people, for he, like his Lord, knew in his own body the fellowship of their sufferings, so that he mixed in their daily life as fearlessly as ever.

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Towards the end of 1886 he was much cheered by a message of help and goodwill from England, together with a cheque for nearly £1,000, sent by the Rev. H. H. Chapman, Vicar of St. Luke's, Camberwell, London, contributed by people of various Creeds, a large amount being given by the very poor. The analogy may seem a little fanciful, but it is nevertheless of passing interest to note that this gift came from a parish dedicated to St. Luke, the 'beloved physician,' whose tender, generous heart would have been so intensely moved with compassion for Damien and his work. In the present generation St. Luke's, Camberwell, is noteworthy for its work in the cause of the

unity of Christendom, particularly in connection with the Orthodox Church of the East.

Damien, though a loyal and faithful son of Rome, did not feel that the gifts bought by the money sent by the Rev. H. H. Chapman should be enjoyed only by members of his own Church, so that, although at first intending to lay it out for the benefit of those of his own Faith, after talking the matter over he revised his list, distributing the good things equally among all those on the island, independent of their beliefs. It is characteristic of Damien that he sat long into the night listening with ‘perfect good nature and perfect obstinacy’ to his colleague’s arguments that the gifts should not be distributed among Roman Catholics only, ending the interview by honestly declaring himself to have been in the wrong, saying openly : “ Yes ! I am very much obliged to you ; you have done me a service ; it would have been a theft.”

He wrote in return to the Vicar of St. Luke’s with deep and touching gratitude, saying that doubtless the majority of the poor sufferers would express their thanks to their kind and unknown friends, besides remembering them in their prayers. The warm-heartedness of Damien’s nature is shown in the signature : ‘ I remain for ever your affectionate friend in our Divine Lord.’

His friend Edward Clifford later remarks on the scrupulous and business-like manner in which he kept his accounts – an example which many saintly Priests might well bear in mind with profit both to themselves and their churchwardens. He was particularly anxious that his English friend should see how he kept his books, and note that the present which had been sent

him had been dispensed among Roman Catholics and others with equal impartiality.

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That same year, 1886, in far-off Belgium, as his mother lay upon her deathbed, the newspapers announced that her heroic son had developed leprosy, unfortunately horribly exaggerating his condition. But Madame de Veuster did not falter, only saying bravely : " Well, well, we shall go to Heaven together."

We can imagine that, as the end drew near, she must have often remembered that other Mother, Blessed Mary, standing beneath the Cross, watching her beloved Son rendering up His life with joyful and willing surrender for sad and suffering humanity. Truly the sword must have pierced her own soul also as from her sick-bed she pictured her boy, whom she had last seen in the full vigour of his young manhood, his face now marred and disfigured with disease, his splendid limbs decayed and failing. Perhaps it was with this thought in her mind that she turned to the picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her bedroom and inclined her head, then, looking at the portrait of her son, gave him the same graceful salutation, before she gradually slipped down into the bed and peacefully passed away, in the eighty-fourth year of her age.

The news of her death must have been a sad blow to Damien, for, although separated from his home both by long years and many weary miles of land and sea, his intensely loving heart always kept alive its interest and affection for his dear ones. It had been a great grief when his father, François de Veuster, that man

of sterling worth and solid piety, passed away in 1873, shortly after his arrival on Molokai. Little homely touches in his letters both to Tremeloo and to Louvain show how strong were the links of love and interest which still held him fast across that great ocean of waters and the dreary length of years.

An example of the thoughtfulness of this loving son, the nearness with which his heart and imagination followed the lives of those still so dear to him, is exemplified by the remark in one of his letters in which he expressed a wonder as to whether his mother had yet had to take to a stick to walk to church. It was with an intense joy, not unmixed with tears, that his family from time to time received his letters. The following, written in March 1865, two years after he left home, when he was toiling in his huge Hawaiian parish, is a particularly delightful example :

' In the midst of the waters of the Pacific Ocean, on this island, you have a son who loves you and a Priest who daily prays for you. I am in the habit of paying you daily a short visit in spirit.'

Few in this luxury-loving age can appreciate the full sacrifice of this heroic missionary, to whom the least of his many burdens must have been the life-long separation from those he most dearly loved. On hearing of his illness, his brother, Father Pamphile, had wished to join him, but the ecclesiastical authorities thought it wiser for him not to come, so that in this life the two were never again united.

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The Christmas of 1888, four months before he was to die, brought Damien a great happiness. Mr.

Edward Clifford, an English artist, came to the island, bringing fresh tokens of sympathy, and many expressions of grief for his illness.

The journey from Hawaii to Molokai in fair weather is full of interest — the intense blue of the Pacific, with the rising and setting sun, form a glory of colour straight from the creative hands of God. In daylight, dark albatrosses, black as night and ever on the wing, hover over the glittering waves ; regiments of the fairy-like nautilus, like tiny blue dishes with transparent sails, rock delicately on the face of the waters, and on the approach of land the gulls scream their welcome like some wild witches' orchestra. Mr. Clifford reached Molokai in a terrible storm, when the towering cliffs, the little whitewashed houses, the two churches, the silvery cataracts leaping down the precipices, were lost in showers of spray. Through the wildness of wind and water the artist saw a figure wearing a broad straw hat painfully making his way along the beach to greet the newcomers, and great was his pleasure when, as with difficulty he was landed on that treacherous shore, Damien welcomed him in his own tongue, explaining that English was now the language which seemed to him the most natural.

As they climbed the hill from the landing-stage the Padre pointed out the chicken farm on the left, and immediately on arrival at Kalawao he took his visitor to the half-finished church, the joy and pride of his heart. The small building, mainly the work of Damien's own hands, in use hitherto, had been incorporated as a transept. Close by in the graveyard outside was the tree under which Damien had spent his early nights on the island, destined to be his last

resting-place, as it had been his first. Not far off was an orange-tree, with the golden fruit gleaming amid the glossy leaves.

The missionary's own four-roomed house almost joined the church. Here they were met by Father Conradi, who lived on the ground floor of the little establishment. In the tiny refectory they were joined by Brother James, Damien taking his meal at a separate table. After dinner the guest was taken up a little flight of steps to see the father's own apartments — a little balcony, beautiful with blossoming honeysuckle, a business-like sitting-room completed by a large map of the world, with another door leading into the bedroom.

Some of Edward Clifford's happiest hours on the island were spent on the sweet-scented balcony with his sketching materials, listening to Damien's experiences. Often an admiring audience of lepers came around them, their faces, in spite of sad disfigurement, bright and happy, and there were generally little ones playing in the garden below, their voices and childish laughter ringing out on the air.

A guest-house had been built for the accommodation of visiting physicians and those few friends brave enough to face the horrors of the island, that they might be safe from touching furniture or utensils in common use. Isolated by its garden from all possible contamination, it consisted of a whitewashed wooden cottage, its pleasant verandah wreathed with climbing roses. Of those who received hospitality within its walls it would be difficult to find a more sympathetic guest than the English artist, Edward Clifford. At the time of his visit the house contained another guest, Mr. Alexander

Sproull, under whose skilled hands the Government work of perfecting the water-supply was being carried out.

There were few birds except the gulls, with their greedy eyes and unhallowed screaming, on Molokai's precipitous shore, but by the time of Mr. Clifford's visit a small number of foreigners had been imported, including an own brother to the Londoner's constant friend, the impudent, jolly little sparrow. Sometimes the honey-bird, with its curved beak and plumage like scarlet velvet, was seen to hover above the tropical ferns and coarse wild ginger, and there were also a big yellow daylight owl, a lovely golden plover, and a snow-white creature with a long tail.

Mr. Clifford, in recounting his experiences, gives a proof of the wild weather which often prevailed for days together, even though the skies were studded with stars or brilliant with sunshine — heavy gusts of wind, warm, yet so violent that one evening the roof of the guest-house was partly torn off, causing the wet to enter in twelve different places. The dreaded cona, the south wind, which had wrecked the miserable leper huts soon after Damien's first arrival, rushing through the gorges to the plain below, tore the climbing roses into bruised, pathetic shreds, beating down the rain so that it fell like heavy drops of gravel.

There were also many lovely days on the island, balmy and delicious, though too often succeeded by heat and stillness so oppressive that everyone became 'as limp as a wet collar,' a state of affairs that missionaries and settlers know so well — a land where it is always afternoon, and the weary nerves are tried to the uttermost.

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It was a gay, bright Christmas, in spite of the deep shadow of death and suffering which of necessity always rested over the leper colony, with the added knowledge that, although his cheerfulness was as great as ever of yore, their beloved Priest's vigour had gone, never to return.

Edward Clifford had brought many gifts from England – beautiful pictures, including an engraving of the ‘Good Shepherd,’ so appropriate to him whose childhood’s name of ‘*Le Petit Berger*’ – the ‘Little Shepherd’ – had been so amazingly fulfilled ; a magic lantern with many slides ; some fine silver, and a wonderful musical instrument turned by a handle. Within half an hour Damien was surrounded by his boys, teaching them the way to play its forty tunes, the biggest boy among them all.

Like the celebrated lady of Banbury Cross, with rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, the Hawaiian native also likes to have music wherever he goes. Two or three Kanakas meet together, and sooner or later will be heard a chant, half nasal, half guttural, relieved by the boom of a shaken calabash, the romantic tinkle of a guitar, or the soft notes of a lute. Drums, gourds, bamboo flutes, all are pressed into service, mingling with the everlasting song of the Pacific as it thunders upon the coral reef, or dashes its fury against some precipitous shore.

The sea had been so rough when Edward Clifford’s boat approached the land that it was feared it would be impossible to land the big wooden case in which the precious gifts from England were packed, and it was on the point of being taken back to the steamer when Clifford, seeing the bitter disappointment of the

pathetic watchers on the shore, decided to have it forced open in the boat and the contents handed out. Great was the rejoicing as the treasures were passed one by one over the heads of the hungry, vicious waves, safe to shore.

The excitement of the visit reached its climax on Christmas night, when the lepers presented a select entertainment entitled *Belshazzar's Feast*. To English eyes it would have seemed dreary in the extreme, but to these poor folk it possessed all the thrills of Drury Lane or the Comédie Française. It was a truly wonderful programme, although the stage was very dark and no one seemed to know exactly who was meant to be Daniel. Belshazzar, with his face hidden comfortably in his arms on a table, appeared to be indulging in something more reposeful than even the proverbial forty winks. A little boy took the part of the queen-mother, and every leper in the place had a part, if it were nothing more than walking on and off the stage, and everyone was immensely happy and excited. After all, what more could be required from a theatrical performance?

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The services on Christmas morning were conducted in Kanaka (a language not understood by Edward Clifford), English being used by educated Hawaiians only. Damien pressed his visitor to help in the choir, and was much delighted when he joined with the boys in the singing of '*Adeste Fideles*' ('O come, all ye faithful'), that loveliest of all the Nativity hymns, which would retain the full wealth of its devotional beauty if local bands and profiteering carol singers

would kindly omit it from their repertoires, leaving it to be sung only before the Altar at the Christmas Eucharist, to which it so nobly belongs.

Damien had gathered together quite a good choir of youthful singers, considering how often leprosy attacked the throats of his people, causing the voices to become husky and harsh. One man still possessed quite a full sweet baritone, and a refined-looking woman, who had formerly been a well-known musician in Honolulu, played the harmonium, despite the fact that her poor, disfigured hands looked quite disabled.

On Sunday morning Damien celebrated his own Mass, followed by a general service at which about eighty lepers were present. The magic lantern which Mr. Clifford had brought, with its many beautiful slides of the Life of Our Lord, proved a great joy in the evening, the artist himself acting as operator, the while Damien explained the pictures. It was a moving and pathetic sight to see that congregation, of which every member was doomed to an early and painful death, hearing from the lips of their dying Priest the blessed story of the Cross and Passion.

Molokai Ahina was a very different place at the time of Edward Clifford's visit from the day when Damien the Deliverer first stepped upon its desolate shore. It is true that the amalgamation of suffering in its most loathsome form, the repulsiveness of the living corruption from which its victims could not escape, the sickening odour which is the natural accompaniment of such a disease, were still there in all their horror. Not all the love and skill in the world could obliterate these, but the faces of the sufferers had changed from

the likeness of beasts into the joyous liberty of the sons of God. Yes, even joyous !

In the daytime the villagers could be seen chatting at their cottage doors, those whose affliction had not affected the fingers busily engaged in weaving mats or baskets, or pounding the taro root in preparation for the native poi, welcoming all passers-by with a courteous greeting and ready smile, their faces, with few exceptions, quite happy. Men and women, both riding astride, galloped freely across the plain between the two villages on game little ponies, showing that all parts of the settlement were in touch with one another.

So much for individual improvements ; the community life had also been raised beyond recognition — the awful charnel-house, bare of everything but its burden of human misery, had been replaced by a hospital, complete with a resident doctor and nurses, the faithful Franciscan Sisters, flowers, music, and all necessary comforts ; neat and convenient cottages, raised on trestles to avoid contact with the damp earth, so injurious to sufferers from leprosy, replaced the miserable grass huts of earlier years ; services were held in two well-built churches, instead of the open air ; an efficient water-supply provided means for all the demands of hygiene. There had been eight hundred lepers on the island at the time of Damien's first arrival ; Mr. Clifford found 1,030 ; of these, nearly half were Roman Catholics, but Damien was the beloved father of them all.

Apart from the great alleviation of suffering which all these improvements, with the addition of warm clothing and sufficient food, had brought about, the

enjoyment of these everyday requirements of civilisation, together with proper medical attention and requisites, had actually caused the disease to take a slightly milder form. The average length of life on Molokai was about four years, when, some vital organ being attacked, the sufferer slowly collapsed and died.

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The days after Christmas were full of added pain and weariness for the sick Priest. Edward Clifford had brought with him some of the newly discovered gurjum oil. To please this kind English friend, Damien tried its effects, finding certainly a little relief, but the dread disease had gone too far for any hope of a cure. At the same time, after a fortnight's treatment the good effects were evident to all, the face looked greatly better ; sleep was very good indeed, instead of being very bad, as he was only able to sleep with the mouth open ; his hands improved, and he was even able to sing Orisons for the first time for months.

It is a picture, pathetic, yet full of beauty, which Mr. Clifford shows of the dying Priest seated upon the steps of the guest-house, within which, for fear of infection, he refused to set his feet, the great southern stars shining like a halo round his head, the golden moonlight flooding the valleys beneath him in a radiance of subdued glory. The soft light hid the suffering on the Priest's tired face — the swollen, ridged forehead, the lost eyebrows, the sunken nose, showing only the well-curved mouth with its tender, humorous smile, the deep, kind eyes, the dark, curling hair.

There were long friendly talks beneath that tropical moon, full of mutual understanding, Edward Clifford

being intensely interested in the Priest's tales of his people and his early days ; Damien, whose once beautiful voice had been such an asset to his work, being equally delighted to listen to the English hymns, asking again and again for special favourites, particularly those so appropriate to himself — ' Brief life is here our portion,' and ' Art thou weary ? Art thou languid ? ' together with the mission hymn, ' Safe home in port.'

The Church of Rome, with all her rich store of devotion, uses few hymns in her worship, a loss which is only realised by simple souls like Damien. His friend Edward speaks with special emphasis of the beautiful expression on the suffering missionary's face as he repeated the hymns for his benefit and on Christmas Day the artist presented him with a copy of Faber's hymns which had been sent by Lady Grosvenor's three little ones. Damien, such a devoted lover of children, read the laboriously written words on the title-page, ' Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy,' picturing the small heads bent over the writing, the chubby hands toiling so carefully over each of the round characters. It was with a very sweet smile that he remarked he would read and value the book.

The circumstances of the father's own labours caused him to take a special interest in the work of the Church Army in its ministry to the down-and-outs of society, and he never tired of listening to Mr. Clifford's descriptions of its activities.

He also asked many affectionate questions about the Rev. H. H. Chapman, the Camberwell Vicar who had shown such warm and practical friendship by the gift of nearly £1,000 for his poor. He was much interested

in hearing the names of all friends who had sent presents by Mr. Clifford's hands, being greatly touched and most happily surprised that English people, and those not even members of his own Creed, should show such love for him. Like many invalids, Damien much enjoyed looking at pictures, not only in books, but loose ones that, having no weight, could easily be turned over by his frail, tired fingers. A special favourite was a print of the 'Praying Hands' by Albrecht Dürer.

Sometimes, when Damien was able to find time from his work, the intimate talks with his artist friend took place by day, perhaps down by the shore as the foam rose from the bases of the black lava rocks in swirling mists, and snowy long-tailed birds wheeled above the heights where the sun cast deep shafts of golden light through the sundered cliffs. A few of the things they said have been recorded. One day Edward Clifford asked if Damien would care to send a message to Cardinal Manning. The reply was typical of his host's great humility, that beautiful priestly attribute : "It is not for such an one as I to send a message to such a dignitary as he." Hesitating for a moment, he added quietly : "I send him my humble respects and thanks."

Mr. Clifford relates that weeks later, when he delivered the message, the Cardinal smiled in answer, saying gently : "I had rather he had sent me his love."

On another occasion Damien was reading a letter from Miss Mary Stuart, a sympathetic English lady :

' You have given up all earthly things to serve God and help others, and I believe you must now have

that joy that nothing can take from you, and a great reward hereafter.'

The Priest looked up from the written page, smiling brightly : " Tell her that I do have that joy now."

His friend Edward relates, in writing the memoirs of his visit, that never had he met a man more endowed with the virtue of humility. The Bishop of Peterborough (the Right Rev. C. Magee) had sent a message : " He won't accept the blessing of a heretic Bishop, but tell him that he has my prayers and ask him to give me his."

Damien smiled modestly and deprecatingly. " Does he call himself a heretic Bishop ? " he asked doubtfully.

Mr. Clifford explained that probably his Lordship had only used the term playfully.

One evening towards the end of his visit the artist showed him a sketch he had made while they had been talking.

Damien examined it with keen interest — mirrors were a luxury in Molokai. He spoke with unconscious pathos : " What an ugly face ! I did not know the disease had made such progress."

Mr. Clifford offered to give a copy of the portrait to Father Pamphile, but Damien feared that his devoted brother might be pained to see the disfigurement that had taken place. There was little his friend could say in reply. Perhaps his mind went to the picture of St. Francis of Assisi which Burne-Jones had painted with his own hand and sent as a gift to the heroic missionary — St. Francis with the sacred, mysterious Stigmata in hands and feet and side, the veritable wounds of the Passion of his Lord, the possession

of which neither doctor nor scientist has ever been able to explain. Surely the marks of the leprosy in Father Damien's noble face and splendid body were another Stigmata, the showing forth to this modern world the symbols of the wounds of Christ !

A portrait of Damien taken after he was stricken by the disease being shown in a London photographer's window, the passers-by shrank from the repulsiveness of the sight, but no sooner was it known that it was a picture of the heroic Priest than all drew near to admire, and the shop was thronged with the thousands desiring to possess a copy. In Birmingham, where a similar photograph was exhibited, the police had to be called to regulate the crowds, so that the ordinary circulation of the traffic might be re-established.

The life and work of Damien made a special appeal to Englishmen, with their deeply rooted love of adventure and admiration of everything that constitutes heroism. Here was no half-legendary figure lost in the misty avenues of centuries, encrusted with doings of more or less veracity, but a saint of their own generation, with like passions, impulses, and, to a certain degree, circumstances to their own. Moreover, Damien was a practical saint, no mystic dwelling in a world apart from others, merely cultivating his own soul, but a man whose spirituality was the channel through which flowed works easy to be understood and appreciated by the matter-of-fact mind of an ordinary man.

A slight glimpse of the nearness of this faithful disciple to his Lord is shown by Edward Clifford, who tells that, while he was bathing, Damien would sit upon the shore reading and praying, retiring at once

into that hidden life which was so real to him. It is only a very great saint, joyous, yet devout as he, who can turn immediately from the distractions of this present world to complete absorption in the world of spirit.

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On the last day of the old year, 1888, Edward Clifford's visit terminated with the arrival by steamer of a batch of two hundred friends of the lepers, coming to spend a few hours on the island, a treat generously provided by Mr. Samuel Damon of Honolulu. Unfortunately, on this occasion the sea was in one of its unkind moods, the great breakers being so formidable that only the men were allowed to land, the women being taken close enough to shore in the boats to be able to see and converse with their dear ones. One girl, in her ardent love for one of the sufferers, defied all rules and boldly leapt on land. The scenes of meeting and parting were affecting in the extreme, accompanied with the terrible native wailing floating across the waves like a funeral dirge. Yet even this, poignant though it seemed, was better than the entire separation which the lepers and their dear ones had previously been forced to endure.

Damien, who, as a monk, had stripped himself of earthly possessions, had little to offer his visitor in his memory but those most priceless gifts of friendship — his prayers and his loving gratitude. One tiny gift was all he could offer him — a little card of pressed flowers from Jerusalem, on which he wrote ; ‘To Edward Clifford from his leprous friend, Joseph Damien.’ He inscribed in his friend’s Bible the

touching words : ‘ I was sick and ye visited me.’ From one so devoid of sentimentality as Damien these little tokens were precious indeed.

The final scene as the artist stood on the steamer’s deck, surrounded by that sorrowful, wailing crowd whose handkerchiefs fluttered in the evening breeze – two hundred signals of distress – is best told in his own words.

Father Damien was with his people on the dark rocks, and behind him the ‘ sombre purple cliffs crowned with white clouds. Down their sides leaped the cataracts. The sun was getting low in the heavens. . . . I saw the last of Molokai in a golden veil of mist.’

With Mr. Clifford’s departure an increase of pain and suffering came upon the invalid, the last agonising steps upon that road which would lead to his final Calvary. Yet, as might have been expected, he bore his Cross nobly, resolutely, and without complaint.

One great consolation remained with him – the insides of his hands were untouched by the disease, so that almost until the end he was able to celebrate the Holy Communion and rejoice in the Presence of his Lord. On Molokai the dread malady often caused all the fingers and toes of the sufferers literally to rot away ; indeed, some of the victims even went so far as to chop off their dead fingers and toes as if they were made of wood. But in Damien’s case the inside of his hands, anointed with the Holy Oils on the day of his Ordination, remained unharmed. Readers of *Ben Hur* will remember that in that dreadful dungeon in which the hero’s mother and sister were imprisoned a leper had been the previous occupant, and it was in

their hands that the unhappy captives were first aware that they had been attacked by the disease.

Springtime, with its promise of life and youth, drew near, but on the leper island of Molokai, behind its dark barrier of rocks and high-flung spray, the devoted missionary prepared for the final bearing of the Cross which should lead him to the gateway of his joyful resurrection.

*Yea, I will follow Thee, dear Lord and Master :
Will follow Thee through fasting and temptation,
Through all Thine agony and bloody sweat,
Thy Cross and Passion, even unto death.¹*

¹ Longfellow.

CHAPTER VII

CALVARY

THE shepherd was giving his life for his sheep, slowly, with bitter anguish, but with joyous and willing surrender. Stretching himself upon his Cross, he was entering into the final majesty of his passion. He who had endured so much, such crucifixion of body, soul, and spirit, was not called upon to endure that strange and awful outer darkness experienced by so many of the saints, when in agonised despair the soul cries aloud, “ My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? ” Damien’s faith was perhaps too simple for this, his nature too childlike.

Yet, though not tormented with this deepest woe of the human spirit, one form of mental suffering was his — the feeling of so little accomplished. His character had been assailed, his motives misjudged, his actions misinterpreted. Many of whom he had hoped much had disappointed him ; enemies had lurked around, among them those with whom he had walked in the House of God as friends — even his dear ones at home seem to have misunderstood him. It is true that the affection and sympathy from England had cheered him, but England was so far away, and very little praise from the outer world ever reached him. And he was only forty-nine, in the prime of life, and dying by inches.

One is irresistibly reminded at this stage in his

history of St. Paul alone and weary in his Roman prison, writing those words of supreme pathos, ' Only Luke is with me ' ; of the girl St. Joan deserted by all, dying amidst the flames as her scorched lips breathed the name of her Divine Lover ; of Bishop Patteson lying in the majesty of death far from his own race, with the five mystic wounds upon his body and the strange knotted palm-branch upon his breast. In common with these saints and martyrs before him, possessed with that humility which showed his greatness, Damien would doubtless have written ' Failure ' across the page of his life, but posterity has emblazoned it instead in letters of gold.

Some of those who from jealousy or narrowness of vision lifted up their voices against Damien dared to say that the father needlessly exposed himself to infection. That he exposed himself to infection night and day every hour he passed on that island was splendidly true, but that this exposure was ever careless or unnecessary was the Devil's own lie. Damien took up his life-work on Molokai's dreadful shore primarily to bring souls to Christ, knowing full well that ultimately he must die in the attempt. No half-measures would have won the bestial inhabitants of that horrible charnel-house. It was only by becoming, as he himself says, a leper among lepers, that he was able to bring them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Through what physical sickness and revulsion, what mental torture, what loneliness and spiritual anguish this led him, not even those who loved him best could ever realise ! That was a secret, hidden deep in the sacred, compassionate heart of God.

In reference to the fact that even his dear ones at

home seem to have failed him, it must be remembered that the soul's greatest agonies come, often unwittingly, from the nearest and dearest. Other folk may be angry, depressed, vindictive, may misconstrue one's actions, take away one's character, libel one's motives, and it is hard, very hard, but should any of these things come from a dear one, a beloved friend or relation, then it is a cross indeed. In Damien's case it was those he loved with such passionate ardour, for whom he prayed with such deep devotion – his brother Pamphile and his nieces – who appear to have been treating him as though they were ashamed of his having contracted the disease which was to prove the brightest jewel in his martyr's crown. With touching words he writes : ' . . . Whilst tending the lepers I have become a leper myself, and I try to bear as best I can the heavy burden which it has pleased God to lay upon me . . . pray for me.'

The above, written on February 4th, 1889, just ten weeks before he was to die, breathes the same spirit of resignation of which blessed Catherine of Siena wrote five hundred years previously :

' . . . The more pain we suffer down here with Christ crucified, the more glory shall we receive : and no pain will be so much rewarded as mental pain and labour of the heart, for these are the greatest pains of all, and therefore worthy of the greatest fruit.'

Yet withal, in spite of disillusionment, disappointment, and ceaseless pain, his heart of irrepressible gaiety made him present a cheerful face and demeanour

to those around him. The dark, curling hair and short beard were turning grey, the eyebrows were gone, the short, straight nose had sunken in, the forehead was swollen and ridged, the ears were greatly enlarged. The hands and face were covered with incipient boils, the splendidly built body marred by many signs of disease. Yet, in spite of all, it was still a pleasure to those around him to look at his bright, sensitive face, the tender, humorous eyes, and it is easy to picture his still beautiful smile as he uttered his *Nunc dimittis* : "Well, God's will be done ! He knows best. My work, with all its faults and failures, is in His hands, and before Easter I shall see my Saviour."

On February 18th, 1889, he wrote his last letter to his brother Pamphile, assuring him that he was still happy and contented, desiring nothing but the complete fulfilment of God's holy will. At that date he was still able to go each morning to the Altar, though, poor, faithful soul, with much difficulty, and not a day passed that he omitted to remember each one of his dear ones in prayer, as had been his unfailing custom from the very beginning of his ministry.

Two days later he sent a message to his English visitor, whom he called his 'good friend Edward,' and who, with the Rev. H. H. Chapman, whom in life he had never seen, were seldom far from his thoughts, ranking among his most beloved friends : ' . . . My love and good wishes. I try to make slowly my Way of the Cross and hope to be soon on the top of my Golgotha.'

'I try to make slowly my Way of the Cross and hope to be soon on the top of my Golgotha.' Beautiful, appropriate words ! His was a veritable *Via Dolorosa*,

a true Way of Sorrows, and he had been walking in it for sixteen weary years. Perhaps with his love of pictures, when writing these words he had in mind the set of the 'Stations of the Cross' which Mr. Clifford had brought with him from England for his church, and which he had received with such touching gratitude.

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On March 28th he took to his bed, which he never left again. Having set his earthly affairs in order, on the 30th he made his preparation for death. Though suffering intensely in the mouth and throat, he never complained, and Brother James, his faithful nurse both day and night, afterwards wrote that he had never seen a happier death. The earlier feelings of failure and disappointment had been appeased ; he was able to rejoice in the churches, the schools, the orphanages, and the hospital which he had founded, and not least in his faithful band of helpers, who, inspired by his example, had given up everything they held dear to labour on this island of death.

Father Wendolin heard his general Confession, then made his own, after which together they renewed the vows which bound them together in their Brotherhood, the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary ; for it must not be forgotten that, although he had worked so much alone, and quite apart from the life of his Community, Damien was a monk, devoted to his Order and a faithful follower of its rules and ordinances.

On April 1st he received the Sacred Viaticum, that Holy Food in whose strength the Christian traverses the dark Valley of the Shadow unafraid. During the

day he was bright and cheerful as usual, drawing attention almost merrily to the unmistakable symptoms which foretold the end.

"Look at my hands ; all the wounds are healing and the crust is becoming black — that is a sign of death, as you know very well. Look at my eyes ! I have seen so many lepers die that I cannot be mistaken. Death is not far off. I should have liked to have seen the Bishop again, but God is calling me to celebrate Easter with Himself. May He be blessed for it !"

The following day, thinking the end was near, Father Conradi administered Extreme Unction, but Damien rallied a little, still showing admirable patience in his enforced inactivity after a life of such super-abundant energy.

With characteristic humility and self-abnegation, he lay on the ground on a miserable mattress like the poorest of his people. He who had given his all for his flock had so far forgotten his own needs that he was found to have neither change of linen nor sheets for his bed. In fact, it was with the greatest difficulty he was persuaded to lie in a bed at all.

"How good God is," he said, speaking with difficulty from his agonised throat, "to have preserved me long enough to have two Priests by my side at my last moments, and also to have the good Sisters of Charity at the Leproserie [hospital]. That has been my *Nunc dimittis*. The work of the lepers is assured, and so I am no longer necessary and will go up yonder."

Father Wendolin, who gives the account of these last precious days, bending over him, asked earnestly : "When you are up above, father, you will not forget those you leave orphans ?"

The dying Priest's delightful humour bubbled up in answer : " Oh, no, if I have any credit with God, I will intercede for all in the Leproserie."

The two fathers, Conradi and Wendolin, with Brother Joseph, were much in his company — Brother James, the tall young Irishman, was his constant nurse, tender and compassionate as any woman, as only a strong man can be. The three Sisters from Kalaupapa, those devoted daughters of St. Francis, visited him often, and the sweet face and gentle voice of the Mother Superior must have brought back fragrant memories of childhood's days and the loving care of his mother, Catherine de Veuster.

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The closing scenes of Damien's life bring with them a certain similarity of suffering, both mental and physical, to those of St. Francis of Assisi. Both were misjudged, misunderstood. Each was called to a Calvary of pain ; Francis to the creeping horror of a particularly agonising form of blindness, Damien to all the tortures of leprosy.

Both were nursed at the last by devoted companions and sons in the Faith ; Francis by Brother Leo and his comrades, Damien by Brother James and the other members of his staff. Even the tender ministry of St. Clare, when for a short while the suffering Francis rested in the garden of San Damiano, has its counterpart in the spiritual solace which it has been seen the Rev. Mother Marianne, herself a Franciscan Sister, was able to give to the dying Priest of Molokai.

Each died on the scene of his labours, Francis lying upon the bare earth of the Chapel of St. Mary of the

Little Portion, the Portuincula, which his own hands had erected, Damien with the utmost difficulty being persuaded to rest upon a miserable apology for a bed flat upon the ground, in his own little house by the church he loved so dearly.

Lovely and pleasant in their lives, surely in death these two are not far divided. Perhaps in the heavenly mansions they walk even now as friends !

For twenty-one days Damien lay in agony, while gradually the familiar roar of the sea, the voices of the children, the cry of the seabirds, grew faint to his dying ears, in the same way as the dear, familiar faces grew dim to his fading eyes. Constantly united to his Lord by prayer and suffering, his sublime patience and still cheery smile were a wonder to all.

Father Wendolin asked that, like Elijah, he would leave him his mantle, that he might inherit his great heart.

"What would you do with it?" was the sick man's reply. "It is full of leprosy."

Towards the end he was continually aware of the presence of two persons in the room, unseen to those around him, one at the foot of his bed and one at the head, but he never mentioned who they were.

The second Sunday after Easter was his last earthly Sabbath, when in the Roman and Anglican Liturgies the Gospel for the Day speaks of the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. In common with Catholic Christendom, this Gospel was read in the two churches of Molokai to the accompaniment of tears and sobbing from the grief-stricken people.

On April 13th he became much worse, and received the Holy Eucharist shortly after midnight. The next day he still saw some of his visitors, and, although unable to speak, affectionately pressed the hands of those standing sorrowfully around him. From time to time he lost consciousness, and on April 15th (1889) the final agony began. To the joy of those who loved him so dearly it was soon over, and he passed without a struggle into the nearer Presence of his Lord, lying as though asleep in the devoted arms of Brother James.

How well he fell asleep !

*Like some proud river, widening towards the sea ;
Calmly and grandly, silently and deep,
Life joined eternity.*

The 'Little Shepherd' had laid down his life for his sheep.

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The dread sound of the passing bell was the signal for the agonised wailing of the bereaved lepers to pierce the air in unavailing sorrow. Robed in his cassock, the beloved Priest lay in the calm majesty of death, all traces of the disease gone from his face, the wounds in his hands quite dry. Having been carried to the church at Kalawao, he lay all night before the Altar he had erected and served so faithfully, surrounded by praying groups of his mourning people. His coffin had been lined with white silk by the three Franciscan Sisters, and was covered by a black cloth, emblazoned with a large white Cross.

With the dawn of morning the Holy Sacrifice was

offered, and his poor body, with its noble, faithful scars, was laid to rest deep down in the golden sand, sealed by a thick layer of cement, looking towards the Altar where he gained all his strength and courage, his true and lasting joy. The site of the grave under the pandanus-tree, chosen long before by Damien himself, had been prepared with loving care under the direction of Father Wendolin. His first resting-place on the island had become his last.

Faithful unto death, he had won the crown of life — the diadem of thorns, bloodstained and woeful, had become the crown of martyrdom, glorious and eternal.

‘ Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him.’

CHAPTER VIII

LEPROSY THROUGH THE CENTURIES

IN ancient Merrie England the leper was an outcast indeed – dead to all legal and political rights, without any privilege of citizenship, classed with lunatics and outlaws, incapable of inheriting either land or property. Even Holy Mother Church no longer counted him as being in the land of the living, actually performing the burial rites over him before he entered the lazarus-house.

The ceremonial for this terrible office was calculated to sound the utmost note of unalterable doom which the soul of man could be called upon to endure. Sprinkled with holy water and preceded by a Priest with Cross borne before him, the unhappy victim was conducted to the church, the awful mental torture of that *Via Dolorosa* being augmented by the words of the Burial Office recited in his ears. Well indeed was it that the Cross was uplifted before his agonised eyes, for truly a life-long Calvary lay before him.

Upon reaching the church, his garments were taken from him, and, shrouded in a funeral pall, he was placed before the Altar between two coffin trestles shrouded in black cloth, the while Mass for the Dead was said over him, with one word only of comfort :

“ If in weakness of body thou art made like unto Christ by means of suffering, thou mayst surely hope that thou wilt rejoice in spirit with God.”

In conclusion, after being led to the lazarus-house he was to occupy, he was provided with a stick, some clothing, and a pair of clappers with which to warn people of his approach. After having commended him to the prayers of the people, the Priest warned him against entering any house or building where men congregated, adding various injunctions to prevent him from mixing in any way with other than lepers. A handful of earth was then thrown over his feet, with the words, "Be thou dead to the world, but alive again unto God," in completion of that poignant ceremonial of the Burial Office which, once seen, can never be forgotten, ". . . earth to earth and ashes to ashes." Finally he was told to have patience and say his prayers, for Christ would be with him. He was then left to work out his own salvation, despised, rejected, and feared of men, until at length he was laid to rest in the cemetery adjoining the lazarus-house of his internment.

One of these cemeteries, containing thousands of the victims of this terrible scourge, lies somewhere in the neighbourhood of Oxford Street, close to High Street, Bloomsbury, where the feet of London's hurrying millions pass continually to and fro. These leper cemeteries were indicated by one huge plain Cross, with the word 'Pax' cut deeply upon the steps. '*Pax!*' Peace indeed to the agonised, corrupted body, the tortured, suffering soul !

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The terminology of this disease is somewhat confused ; it was called by the ancients *elephantiasis* and also *lepra*, but the latter term at least was also used of

other maladies ; for example, the skin trouble now known as psoriasis. In modern times, both these names have been applied to other diseases as well, *Elephantiasis Arabum* being distinct from leprosy, which is distinguished as *Elephantiasis Græcorum* or *Lepra Arabum*, sometimes also called *Leontiasis*. Black leprosy is by some supposed to have received its current medical name, *Elephantiasis*, from the Greek word meaning ‘elephant,’ on account of its rendering the skin like that of the giant animal, scabrous, dark-coloured, and furrowed all over with tubercles.

The name lazarus-house, or lazaretto, comes from the word *lazar*, a leper, so-called from Lazarus, the beggar full of sores, traditionally the sores of leprosy, who lay at the gate of Dives in the parable recorded by St. Luke. The word is derived from the Hebrew, *El'azar*, ‘He whom God helps.’

A favourite and merciful form of piety was the endowment of these leper hospitals. The Prior was generally one who, having devoted himself to the care of these stricken brethren, had himself contracted the disease. A particular Order of monks, called the Knights of St. Lazarus, founded in Syria A.D. 1119, afterwards spreading over Europe, specially gave their lives to this service, the Master of their Order being always a leper, that perfect sympathy for the sufferers for whom he was responsible might be ensured.

Jean Paul Richter remarks that ‘the noblest deeds of heroism are done within four walls, not before the public gaze.’ It is difficult even so much as to visualise the daily life of these saintly Knights of Lazarus, a life which was perpetuated by Damien on Molokai, and,

fired by his example, is followed in many corners of the mission field to-day.

The account of the food supplied to the lazarus-house of St. Julian at St. Albans, A.D. 1335-1349, makes interesting reading :

' Let every leprous brother receive from the property of the hospital for his living and all necessaries whatever he has been accustomed to receive by the custom observed of old in the said hospital — namely, every week seven loaves, five white and two brown, made from grain as thrashed : every seventh month fourteen gallons of beer, or eightpence for the same. Let him have in addition on certain feast days, for every feast, one loaf, one jar of beer (or one penny for the same), and one obolus (a halfpenny), which is called the charity of the said hospital. And let every leprous brother receive at the Feast of Christmas forty gallons of good beer (or forty pence for the same), two quarters of pure and clean corn, which is called the great charity ; also at the Feast of St. Martin each leper shall receive one pig from the common stall, or the value in money if he prefer it.' On various other specified times the inmates of this hospital were also given more pennies, an obolus for buying herbs, four shillings for clothes, and fourteen shillings for fuel, 'as has been ordained of old for the sake of peace and concord.' It will be recollected that the leper has a great predisposition to cold, by which his sufferings are greatly augmented, for which reason the last sentence is pregnant with much meaning.

At Sherburn, in Durham, the diet was more varied, including a mess of flesh three days in the week, and fish, with cheese and butter on the remaining four,

the cooking being done in a common kitchen by one cook. High festivals were celebrated by a double portion, calculated to give the leper a love of Mother Church. Lent provided fresh salmon and other fish ; Michaelmas the good old English dish of roast goose ; history does not relate whether the ‘apple sass’ was supplied as well. One goose was provided for every four lepers, a generous ration, although perhaps not sufficiently generous for the gentleman who remarked that the goose was a silly bird, as it was too much for one person and not enough for two. Each of these lepers also received every year for clothing three yards of white or russet woollen cloth, six yards of linen, and six of canvas. In addition to the ordinary supply of firewood, four Yule logs were provided at Christmas. A cartload and four trusses of straw and rushes were also supplied for bedding and floor-covering two or three times a year. Obviously if one were afflicted with leprosy it was as well to find oneself in the neighbourhood of Sherburn or its like, for all the richer and larger hospitals were remembered by generous benefactors.

The sufferer in these houses of refuge was not idle. He attended the services in the chapel attached to the lazaretto, including the Seven Hours. He worked at his trade or in the fields and gardens attached to the institution, taking regular hours for meals and recreation. Yet, in spite of all the kindness the monks showed their poor pensioners, the nature of their malady cast a gloom over both their own souls and the general atmosphere of the Community.

An excellent example of one of these leper hospitals, still in use as an almshouse, is to be found in St.

Nicholas's Lazar-House, Harbledown, lying on the hillside one mile outside Canterbury, at the spot from which mediæval pilgrims to the ' holy, blissful martyr's shrine ' (St. Thomas à Becket, Archbishop, martyred within the Cathedral, December 29th, A.D. 1170) caught their first glimpse of the Angel Steeple and the fair walled city at their feet. The lazaretto, with its adjacent church of St. Nicholas, patron saint of all wayfaring men, was founded by Archbishop Lanfranc, and provided accommodation on separate sides of the building for both leprous men and women, while in addition an extra burden of hospitality was imposed upon its Prior and Brethren by the constant stream of pilgrims that for something like three centuries flowed through the little town. There being no State aid for the relief of distress, the lazarus-house seldom confined its ministrations to the lepers alone, but as a side-line assisted any sick poor who presented themselves at its gates.

The wooden leper hospital of Harbledown has twice been rebuilt. The present Jacobean structure dates from 1674, but the church, with its Norman tower and doorway, its time-stained walls, and twelfth-century benches, is little changed since the days of Lanfranc. One curious feature, not unknown in churches frequented by the mediæval pilgrim, is the slope of the chancel down to the west door, so arranged that the building can be cleansed by a plentiful flushing out with water, not unnecessary after its night-long occupation by a mixed — very mixed — company of the devout, including many whose pilgrimage was being made for the healing of very grievous bodily ailments. Especially was this purification necessary in the case of St.

Nicholas of Harbledown, of which a portion of the building, formerly partitioned off by a wooden screen, was apportioned to the lepers.

An interesting relic of those pilgrims immortalised by Chaucer as they journeyed to the venerated city is held by the present foundation of St. Nicholas, in the shape of the actual crystal from the shoe of St. Thomas à Becket, the upper leather of which, being the most venerated possession of the hospital, was exhibited by the Brethren for the adoration and alms of the pilgrims. The charming blue throat-wort, or *campanula trachelium*, known to us as the Canterbury bell, and accounted a sovereign remedy by the ancient herbalists for affections of the throat and neck, formerly grew in wild profusion in the lovely countryside which surrounded this lepers' home.

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Not every leper had the security of being housed in the safety of the lazaretto. Many wandered about the countryside like forlorn ghosts, shunned and hated by all, driven away with violence from every human habitation, set on by savage dogs, supporting their wretched existence on berries or any other rough food the fields and woods afforded, augmented by the scanty charity given by the more tender-hearted. A large number wended their way to the lepers' wells, of which a famous example existed at Brewood, in Staffordshire, whose healing waters were accounted of special efficacy.

Numerous churches show what is termed leper or low-side windows, of which a typical specimen is to be seen in St. Mary's, Guildford, Surrey. They are

generally found in the south wall of the chancel, nearer to the ground than the other windows, the popular idea being that by this means the lepers, although not permitted to enter the church, were able to assist at Mass and observe the moment of Consecration, just as worshippers in the Lady Chapel were given a view of the High Altar by means of the oblique opening in the chancel wall entitled the hagioscope. Unfortunately for this theory of the leper window, there are two serious objections to its veracity, one being that lepers were not allowed to enter the church-yard, the other that in most cases the window is in such a position that it is impossible to see the Altar. However that may be, the name given to these windows reminds us of those homeless wanderers to whom in the hour of their greatest need even the consolations of Holy Church were denied.

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In the reign of Edward III (A.D. 1327-77) all lepers were excluded from the City of London, the porters stationed at the gates being liable to punishment should they allow them to pass. A just and sensible decree, but spoilt by the cruel wording of the document in which the lepers are accused of 'endeavouring to contaminate others with their abominable blemish, that so, to their own wretched solace, they may have the more fellows in suffering.'

The wickedness of this accusation was easily surpassed in A.D. 1351 by King Philip of France, who, greedy of the riches of the lazarus-houses, and in order that he might seize their lands and wealth, was so inhumane as to cause many poor lepers to be burnt

alive, giving out as an excuse that they had poisoned the wells of the people — a repetition of Nero's infamous plea for the extermination of the Christians, using them as scapegoats for the burning of the city of Rome which his own folly and love of masquerade had caused. Small wonder that such deeds as these caused mediæval artists to depict kings as permanently residing hereafter in that place where the fire is never quenched !

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Leprosy, primarily a disease of tropical and semi-tropical countries, was said to have been first brought to England by Crusaders returning from the Holy Land. But as lepers existed in England in the days of our Saxon ancestors, and the succeeding Normans built many lazarus-houses for their accommodation, the Crusaders can be freely exonerated from all blame. The mere fact that Harbledown alone was sheltering its leper colony nine years before Peter the Hermit roused Europe to arms in the First Crusade in A.D. 1095 is a proof that it was not the return of these warriors which was responsible for the appearance of the disease in England.

In Ireland, St. Finian, the leper saint to whom an English newspaper made reference when speaking of Father Damien, flourished as early as the middle of the sixth century. His story is a curious one. Bishop and Abbot, surnamed Lobhar, or the Leper, St. Finian, whose feast is celebrated on March 16th, was a descendant of the Kings of Munster and a disciple of St. Brendan. He imitated the patience of Job under a loathsome and tedious distemper for which his surname was given him. Legend states that there

burned within his soul the longing for a martyr's crown, a desire which was fulfilled by a mother bringing to him her son, dumb, blind, and leprous, beseeching that he would heal the child. Finian prayed earnestly, and it was revealed to him that only by taking the child's leprosy upon himself could the little one be cured. On Finian giving consent, the child was made whole and the saint became covered with ulcers from head to foot. The ruins of the first monastery he founded, set in a fairy-like scene of wild beauty, can be seen on the island of Innisfallen, on romantic Lake Killarney.

A charming story of the mythical founder of Bath, Prince Bladud, states that he was a victim of the malady, and, in consequence, being driven from his Court, followed the example of the Prodigal Son by becoming a swineherd. Unfortunately, his pigs caught the infection from him, but cured themselves by wallowing in the hot springs, the famous *aquaæ solis*. The Prince, copying their lead, rejoiced in the same happy experience, and, on finding himself cured, founded the city of Bath, where, in accordance with the proper ending to such a story, he lived happy ever after. If any truth underlies the legend, then leprosy was known in Britain nine hundred years before the Birth of Christ, two thousand years before the First Crusade.

That the malady was once extremely prevalent in these islands is proved by the fact that at a time when the population of the whole of England was only in the neighbourhood of two millions, about a quarter of that of the present metropolitan area of London, there were two hundred leper hospitals scattered about the country providing accommodation for something like

four thousand victims, exclusive of those who wandered homeless through the land. After about A.D. 1250 every large town, as well as many villages, possessed a lazar-house, but many of these were poorly endowed and life within them was harsh and wretched, although they were privileged in possessing their own chapels and chaplains.

Legend, that charming flowery garment which clings to the memories of the great, tells that the Emperor Constantine, being stricken with leprosy, was cured by receiving Baptism at the hands of St. Sylvester, Bishop of Rome. As in every legend there lies a germ of truth, in this case the Emperor's malady was probably the leprosy of sin, rumour having it that the noble gentleman had murdered both his wife Fausta and his son Crispus. Fortunately for his ultimate destiny, his conscience was in good working order, and after terrible remorse, succeeded by the genuine repentance of a contrite heart, his soul was cleansed from its awful guilt by the regenerating stream flowing from the holy Font.

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The Bible speaks much of lepers, but it must be borne in mind that in all probability sufferers from other forms of revolting skin diseases were included under the term – this being particularly implied in the Book of Leviticus, where directions are given for distinguishing between 'clean' and 'unclean' leprosy, the former being apparently curable. The predominant and characteristic form of the disease in Scripture is a white variety, covering either the entire body or a large tract of its surface, which has obtained the name

of *lepra Mosaica*. Such were the cases of Moses, Miriam, Naaman, and Gehazi (Exod. iv. 6 ; Num. xii. 10 ; 2 Kings v. 1 and 27 ; compare Lev. xiii. 13).

The disease is not mentioned in the Scriptures prior to the residence of Israel in Egypt. The Egyptian and Syrian climates, and especially the rainless atmosphere of the former, are very prolific in skin diseases, including in an exaggerated form some which are common in the cooler regions of Western Europe. The heat and drought acting for long periods upon the skin, and the exposure of a large surface of the latter to their influence, combine to predispose it to such affections. Even the modified forms known to our hospitals show a perplexing variety, and at times a wide departure from the best-known and recorded types ; much more, then, may we expect departure from any routine of symptoms in this class of disorders amidst the fatal fecundity of the Levant. It seems likely that diseases also tend to exhaust their old types, and to reappear under new modifications. Influenza and measles, a few years ago considered quite mild and amiable, requiring only simple nursing and a little humouring of the patient, are now capable of assuming the alarming features of a modern plague.

With regard to leprosy not being mentioned by Biblical writers until the exile in Egypt, Manetho, the Egyptian Priest and historian of the third century B.C., asserts that the Egyptians drove out the Israelites as infected with leprosy — a strange reflex, perhaps, of the Mosaic narrative of the plagues of Egypt, yet probably also containing a germ of truth. The Egyptian bondage, with its studied degradations and privations, and especially the work of the kiln under an

Egyptian sun, must have had a frightful tendency to generate this class of disorder, particularly as the disease is aggravated by unwholesome or innutritious diet, want of personal cleanliness, and hard labour in a heated atmosphere amongst dry or powdery substances. The 'baker's' and 'bricklayer's itch' are a distant relation to the leprosy endured by the Israelites as they worked in the brick kilns beneath Egypt's burning sky.

The severity of the Levitical code of conduct drawn up during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness is not surprising when the circumstances are considered. The sudden and total change of food, air, dwelling, and mode of life caused by the Exodus from Egypt to this nation of newly emancipated slaves, may possibly have given rise to a further tendency to skin-disorders, and novel and severe repressive measures may have been required in the desert-moving camp to secure the public health, or to allay the panic of infection.

By Jewish Law, as set forth in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of the Book of Leviticus, the leper was forced to make his dwelling without the camp (in Our Lord's day many of these wretched beings lived among the tombs out on the hillsides), cut off from all dealings with his brother men, and obliged to cover his mouth with his hand, crying, "Unclean, unclean!" whenever by accident anyone approached his vicinity. No wonder to the Jew leprosy was the symbol of sin, for one corrupts and kills the body, the other destroys the immortal soul. In the Middle Ages the leper who was not confined to a lazarus-house was furnished with a grey gown and a wooden clapper

to announce his obnoxious presence — he also being obliged to cry “Unclean, unclean,” and to cover his mouth.

Our Lord’s infinite compassion was stirred by the sad plight of sufferers from this malady, and one of the most touching instances of his power is shown in the healing of the ten lepers, only one of whom returned to express his gratitude, and he was a member of the despised race of Samaritans.

But although among the Jews victims of the disease were accounted unclean, and forced to live separated from their fellows, the leprosy of that period may in many cases have been nothing more than a particularly obnoxious and obstinate skin disease, apparently not producing in its victims the loss of members or the dreadful corruption of the flesh experienced in England during the Middle Ages, or in the Hawaiian Islands and elsewhere to-day. Naaman the Syrian, though a leper, was still the captain of his hosts, leading his armies to battle, and even conducting his master the king, leaning upon his arm, to worship in the temple of Rimmon.

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Leprosy can be divided into three classes, the first being characterised by the whole body becoming white and of a scaly texture, but with little effect on the general health of the sufferer. This is the disease of Bible days, now extremely rare, the story of Gehazi, Elisha’s servant, being an instance of the curious snowy pallor which the victim’s skin assumed.

The second variety is entitled anæsthetic, owing to the extremities becoming insensible to pain and

gradually sloughing away with sores, the body meanwhile becoming weak and crippled, an easy prey to dysentery and diarrhoea.

The third variety, named tubercular, is distinguished by swellings and discolourations, most painful to behold. Damien, as is so often the case, suffered from both these aspects of the disease, anæsthetic and tubercular. It will be recollectcd with regard to the anæsthetic condition of Damien that, although he had previously been a little suspicious he had contracted the malady, he was given unmistakable proof when he found that his foot was entirely insensible to pain resulting from boiling water being poured over it. Lepers often scald and burn themselves without being aware of having done so.

The disease is first recognisable by a reddish colour in the face, hoarseness of voice, loss of hair, terrible dreams and nightmare, spots or eruptions on the skin. The worst form, and also the most frequent, is that in which the blood is corrupted and the whole system poisoned. Sores break out in various parts of the body, more particularly in the hands and feet. The body literally rots to pieces, fingers and toes slough off bit by bit, frequently followed by the disappearance of the whole hand or foot concerned. In this connection a pathetic story is told by a Priest ministering to a leper settlement in South Africa. The gradual disappearance of their fingers caused his servers to be unable to fasten their cassocks, so that he was obliged to perform this little office for them himself, until one happy day friends from England sent out a truly noble buttonhook of giant dimensions, which to their joy the sufferers were able to manipulate themselves.

Each fresh sore is attended by intense pain, but, once the horrid ulcer has come to its head, there is little more trouble, and the victim may pass some weeks or even months without actual pain, though dying steadily and surely inch by inch and hour by hour.

The face becomes particularly repellent as gradually the eyebrows lose their hair, the nostrils swell, and the ulcers eating into the flesh cause the skin to bear the appearance of a honeycomb. In the latter stages, as the blood thickens, the nose falls in, the lips become enlarged, the pulse scarcely beats. Pictures of Father Damien, taken after he was attacked by the disease, show very noticeably this thickening of the lips and the curious honeycombed appearance of the skin.

It is sad to see that in some cases both face and body become so repellent that they gradually have to be swathed from sight, even from the eyes of fellow sufferers. Perhaps the worst feature of the disease, particularly to those of a refined and sensitive nature, is that the unhappy victim becomes an offence, not only to himself, but to all who find themselves in his vicinity. Damien gives the explanation, ‘The flesh being eaten away gives a foetid odour ; even the breath of the leper becomes so foul that the air around is poisoned with it.’

The disease varies very much in duration, some being released at the end of twelve months, others enduring their living death for ten to fifteen years.

Investigation seems to prove that the malady can be propagated by heredity, inoculation, inhalation, and, in certain conditions, contagion. Undoubtedly in the past segregation has proved the best preventative, although experts are hoping that in a few years’ time

compulsory segregation will be superseded by the voluntary treatment of early cases in clinics, a method which is in use at the present time in India and in parts of Africa under British rule. It is estimated that if in the early stages of the disease a leper's household and all other close contacts are examined for any sign of the disease, this examination being repeated every six months for five years, it ought to be possible to detect 80 per cent. of infections from him in the early, curable stage, and to treat them so that they are cured before they become infective. By this method, theoretically, the foci of infection would be reduced in five years to only 20 per cent. By repeating this for another five years the infection would be only 4 per cent. The method is already being tried in various parts of the world, and it is surprising to find how familiar the people of these districts are becoming with the early symptoms of the disease, so that it is probable that as soon as experience shows them the hopefulness of treatment in the first stages they will come forward in ever-increasing numbers.

It has been stated that the Asiatic form of leprosy is less resistant than the African. This may partly account for a doctor in Kashmir stating that in his judgment the disease is not hereditary, although undoubtedly, as in the case of tubercular parents, the children of lepers are more prone to the malady than others. Nor do some experts consider that contagion in adults is a very serious factor, except when a healthy person has an open wound upon the body. In the case of children, they agree that the risk of contagion is extremely real, particularly during the period of teething, when everything is put into the mouth.

A doctor working in China declares that leprosy is an ordinary germ disease whose bacillus was discovered over half a century ago, and that the germs enter the body through abrasions in the skin coming from such causes as insect bites and scratching. Unfortunately, the Chinese victim is generally in an advanced state of the disease before he applies for aid, and the danger in that country lies not so much in the beggar lying by the wayside in all the horror of his sores and degradation, but in the sufferers hidden away in the homes, from the luxurious mansion down to the poverty-stricken grass hut.

A missionary working among Japanese lepers writes: 'It is not unusual for a man to develop leprosy after his marriage, and, though the wife does not become leprous, she transmits the disease to her children.'

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In England the dread disease seems to have spent its fury by the end of the sixteenth century, having begun to abate by the fourteenth, although it lingered long in Cornwall and the Shetland Isles. The lazars-houses became empty and the kind-hearted no longer beheld the weary sufferers dragging their wretched bodies from village to village, despised and rejected of men.

The few cases that exist in our present time are devotedly cared for at St. Giles's Home for British Lepers at Bricknacre, near Chelmsford.

The white man overseas is liable to infection — not only the devoted doctor, nurse, or Priest, engaged in the work of alleviation, but also the ordinary civilian, if he does not take proper precautions.

As the malady died down in England and Europe, chiefly through segregation, the charity of the lazare-houses was no longer required, and people's minds quickly forgot the victims who still suffered untended in other parts of the world. Damien's death was a veritable trumpet-call on behalf of these souls so grievously afflicted.

It is true that a little work among lepers overseas had been accomplished before his passing drew such general attention to the cause, the labours carried out by the Venerable P. Donders in Dutch Guiana being a splendid example (1809-71). In Great Britain the Mission to Lepers, started in 1874, had been running for fifteen years, but Damien's death gave the necessary impetus to the work ; it was the torch which made the smouldering fires of endeavour blaze into a flame of loving service which has never died out.

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Medical science has made many advances in the treatment of leprosy since Damien's day. Never hopeless about the ultimate discovery of a cure, his own experience caused him to say, ' To my knowledge a cure has not yet been found. Perchance, in the near future, through the untiring perseverance of physicians it may be found.'

To-day a cure is known, but unfortunately several factors militate against its efficiency, the first being that it is essential it should be undertaken in the early stages of the disease. The treatment is a long and often very painful process, and in the present condition of native life, where the cases chiefly occur, very difficult to administer. A complete cure is practically

guaranteed if the patient's condition is discovered at the onset of the disease and it is possible for him to remain in hospital for the treatment.

The difficulties of the situation can be more fully realised when it is remembered that, unlike our own 'particulars' of chicken-pox, measles, scarlet fever, and the like, when the incubation period varies from a few days to no more than four weeks at the outside limit, the incubation period of leprosy extends to so much as five years. In the case of out-patients, particularly in India, where the hospital serves such vast areas, the difficulties of transport are very great, and the patient is extremely apt, perhaps through no fault of his own, to allow the stated interval between the treatments to extend indefinitely, so that when at last he comes from his distant village to present himself at the hospital the time between his last appearance is so prolonged that the whole process has to start again. Naturally this is not encouraging either to the patient or his physician. Nor are matters improved when the latter discovers that the invalid has eaten the ointment that was given him to rub on the outside of his person, including the paper wrapping.

Native customs are another great stumbling-block in the path of the would-be healer. In the Hawaiian Islands the family pipe passed from the leper's mouth to the person sitting next to him has been shown to be an extremely fruitful method of propagating the disease. Feeding from the communal calabash has also had its due share in spreading the malady.

The extremely elementary, and often non-existent, knowledge of the laws of hygiene and sanitation is an almost insuperable barrier to the treatment of leprosy

in the native home, whether in India, Africa, or the South Seas. The mud floor of an African kraal or an Indian house, teeming with germs, often coming from discharges from leprous feet, is a hotbed of the disease, particularly in the case of the children, who, in the manner of babies from John o' Groats to Sydney, crawl happily on the ground, sucking their dirty, chubby little fingers as they go. Imagination supplies all further details, opening out a horrifying vista of the long road of reform which must be travelled before the skill of the doctors and nurses can have the opportunity to effect cures on anything but a small scale, particularly when it is remembered that some of the primary causes of the disease are insanitary conditions, filthy habits, and unwholesome food, although persons in comfortable circumstances are by no means exempt. Even with cases which, after long treatment in hospital, have been discharged as completely restored to health, renewed residence in the native home often brings back a recurrence of the disease, a state of affairs which is heartbreaking to both doctor and patient. Added to these difficulties in tropical lands are the multitudes of creatures, particularly the jigger, whose bites undoubtedly act as an inoculation.

In some parts of Africa, particularly the Sudan, where leprosy is an ever-increasing peril, mice and crickets are great offenders, and the natives of these districts being heavy sleepers, a limb which has escaped from the covering blanket may have a nasty little wound inflicted upon it before the victim is aware that he has been bitten. The mouse of the Sudan is a very far-off relation of the 'puir wee timorous beastie' of Burns's description, and the grass

huts of the district form a perfect home, as well as a happy hunting-ground, both for these creatures and the crickets, who devour whatever they happen to alight upon when they jump gaily and promiscuously from the walls. An exposed bit of the sleeper, a mosquito net, a blanket, all are food for their accommodating larder, and the difficulties of not figuring in their menu are considerable.

Apart from inoculation, some authorities maintain that in some way fish food, and especially when salted or decomposed, is a primary cause of the disease.

The African form of leprosy seems more resistant to treatment than the Asiatic, the latter responding far more readily to efforts of alleviation. The Sudan, with its heavy toll of victims, has even been blamed for producing the first victim, and the earlier Greek and Roman writers refer to the malady as an Egyptian disease, although it certainly existed in India and China in very remote periods.

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The first great advance in the treatment of leprosy was made in the year 1874, when Hanson discovered the bacillus associated with leprosy lesions, thus opening up the avenue for a scientific diagnosis of the disease. The gurjum, or gurjun, balsam, also called the wood oil, brought by Mr. Clifford to Molokai, which afforded temporary relief to Father Damien, is the product of a fir-tree grown in the Andaman Islands, off the coast of Burmah. In its raw condition it is a brown, sticky substance, but when shaken up with three parts of lime-water it becomes as soft and smooth as butter.

The treatment consisted of rubbing the ointment all over the body, and taking a small dose of equal quantities of the lime-water and oil internally.

The tree from which the gurjum oil is obtained is so large that houses and canoes are built from it. The balsam itself has been used in the East as a substitute for the South American copaiba as a varnish for boats, and for preventing the attacks of ants on timber. It was at the request of Mr. Manley Hopkins, the Hawaiian consul, that the English Government in 1888 purchased large quantities of this oil from the Indian Government for the purpose of checking or alleviating leprosy in Hawaii.

The chief obstacle to the efficacy of the treatment was the lepers' inherent callousness and hatred of exertion, so that the energy required in the daily rubbing of the body was seldom forthcoming.

In the middle of 1915, Sir Leonard Rogers made his important investigations with soluble sodium salts or soaps, of the lower melting-point fatty acids of chaulmoogra oil, using them by both subcutaneous and intra-muscular injection in leprosy. The worldwide issues at stake in that terrible war year of 1915 prevented the discovery making the stir it merited, but it is gratifying to know that, while tens of thousands of the flower of the nations' youth were laying down their lives on that far-flung battle-line, Sir Leonard's research marked the dawn of a new era in the alleviation of the agonies of an untold number of sufferers. He has recently been able to improve his discovery by the manufacture of a new non-irritating sodium hydno-carbate entitled Alepol, which is being used extensively

in British Colonies. It is especially valuable as it dispenses with the painful vein trouble often caused by the earlier treatment.

The more chronic cases are also showing hopeful prospects by treatment with iodide of potassium, which, though extremely expensive and in some instances apt to involve much suffering, is already said to work wonders. This drug also holds possibilities that it may prove efficacious as a means of diagnosis in early doubtful cases.

Tobacco smoke is believed to act as a disinfectant against the germ of leprosy, so that in some settlements the pipe or cigarette is encouraged both among the patients and those who minister to them. It will be remembered that Damien found his pipe of great assistance in overcoming the nauseating odour of the lepers and preventing it being carried in his own clothes.

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It is not surprising that leprosy produces a great depression in its victim, an abyss of darkness and despair which is a veritable shadow of death. The very appearance of the leper, with the thickened skin of the face puckered and nodulated, gives a 'peculiar, heavy, morose expression.'

In certain parts of the world, and more particularly in China, the popular idea maintains that the sufferer is afflicted because of some sin he has committed, a belief which was apparently held by the old Levitical Law. He is the social pariah of the world, and his doleful cry of 'Unclean' refers not only to his corrupted body, but also to his supposedly criminal

soul. In China the 'walking corpse,' as many thousands of centuries have named him, is not only ostracised and most cruelly treated, but popular thought assigns to him the belief that even in the hereafter he will be excluded from the society of his fellow-spirits. To a people whose worship of their ancestors is such a beautiful and important national characteristic, this belief in the utter damnation of lepers is fraught with a terrible significance, and perhaps nowhere in the world are missions to lepers more urgently needed.

It is no matter for surprise that the leper in his physical and spiritual desolation finds amazing comfort in the religion of the 'Man of Sorrows,' seeing in the Crucified Lord, wounded in hands and head, in feet and side, a glorified example of his own most bitter sufferings. From every mission hospital in the world comes the same story, and no more striking example of its truth can be found than the response of Molokai's bestial sufferers to the teaching of Father Damien. Not only in almost every case did the actual countenances of the victims come to show inward peace and even happiness, but one old man, lying blinded in hospital from the effects of the disease, went so far as to tell a visitor that he was thankful for the malady, as it had saved him from much evil. It would seem that the leper, an outcast from his fellow-men, becomes a special object of the Divine compassion.

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Damien, in the fulfilment of his priestly duties, observed the bad effect on a married victim of enforced separation from wife or husband, the oppression of mind thus resulting being even more unbearable than

the physical suffering. Those so separated only seemed to gain relief by throwing themselves into the pursuit of reckless and immoral habits, a state of affairs truly deplorable. On the other hand, the victim who arrived with wife or husband appeared always more resigned, and was naturally aided by the loving nursing and companionship of the other. A curious sidelight on these conditions is the fact that men are far more prone to leprosy than women, as is the case with various other diseases, as though going to prove that woman, with her burden of motherhood and its attendant disabilities, has sufficient to bear.

Another strange circumstance mentioned by a present-day worker in a leper hospital in China is that it is very rare for both husband and wife to be affected by the disease. One healthy woman accompanied her leper husband to Molokai, and when eventually he died, she married three more leper husbands before 'last of all she died also' without having contracted the disease. Her matrimonial activities are an irresistible reminder of that lady whose alluring attributes caused her to be the bride of seven brothers in succession. A dangerous precedent for the lepers to have followed !

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With regard to the children of lepers, it is possible for them to be quite free from actual infection at birth, but they are naturally susceptible to the disease, and it is advisable, in spite of the violation of the sanctity of the home and the rights of parents, to remove them as early as possible. These little ones often have greatly impaired vitality, and one missionary Priest

working in a South African leper hospital gives it as his experience that when they leave the nursery of the asylum they rarely survive. He gives a pathetic picture of the little body in its coffin, hastily contrived from a starch-box, being laid to rest beneath Africa's burning sun, the while the few mourners sing in their native dialect, 'There's a Friend for little children. . . .' Poor little creatures ! There is no need for weeping as they are laid to rest, but rather for rejoicing that they are spared further suffering.

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Most people felt that twelve years on the island of Molokai had rendered Damien immune from infection, yet he himself always expected that he would find himself a victim. Determined in all things to give no cause to his people to feel that he feared them in their sufferings, except that he lived strictly apart and attended carefully to the ordinary laws of health and hygiene, the young Padre entered into every circumstance of their lives.

It is even stated that he accepted his turn of the horrible communal pipe, though with much inward revulsion. Whether or no this latter is true, it is certain that he lived constantly in a polluted atmosphere, dressing the sufferers' sores with his own hands, washing their dreadful bodies, visiting their death-beds, bending close to catch their husky voices, even digging their graves. It was a foregone conclusion that sooner or later he must rank among them.

The supreme sacrifice of his life had been offered, and Damien had won the martyr's crown. He who on earth had received little reward, in death became a

world-hero. It was fitting that England, which had shown him the greatest friendship, should have been the first to receive trustworthy information of his passing.

The sad news coming to Honolulu flashed across the world, appearing on the posters of every European and American capital. A few days after his death a Solemn Requiem was held in the cathedral at Honolulu, where twenty-five years before he had celebrated his first Mass. On this latter occasion all the principal persons on the island were present.

Emotion without precedent was caused by the news. All classes united in mourning his loss, the papers, rivalling in praise of his name, gave him the title of the 'Hero of Charity.' Such sympathy in what was felt to be a common loss had never before been experienced between Roman Catholics and other denominations, and in proclaiming his honour all barriers of class and creed were broken down. *The Church Times* stated that it rejoiced in being able to anticipate the Roman Curia by adding Damien's name to the Church's bede-roll of the saints.

England arose immediately to action, and the Prince of Wales – afterwards King Edward VII – with his generous heart, presided at a public meeting at which three resolutions were passed :

1. That a suitable monument should be erected at Molokai.
2. That a Damien Institute should be established, where the study of leprosy might be the leading feature.
3. That a detailed enquiry should be made into the conditions and betterment of lepers residing in India and the other British Dominions.

Unlike many resolutions passed at public meetings, all three of the above were faithfully carried out.

With regard to the first - the erection of a suitable monument - Damien's English friends sent out to Molokai a beautiful Cross composed of finest British granite, fitting symbol of the heroic Priest's character. A white marble tablet attached to the Cross was engraved with his sculptured profile and the words so appropriate to his faithful ministry :

'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'

FATHER DAMIEN¹

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE REVEREND DR. HYDE OF HONOLULU

Sydney, February 25, 1890.

SIR,—It may probably occur to you that we have met, and visited, and conversed; on my side, with interest. You may remember that you have done me several courtesies, for which I was prepared to be grateful. But there are duties which come before gratitude, and offences which justly divide friends, far more acquaintances. Your letter to the Reverend H. B. Gage is a document, which, in my sight, if you had filled me with bread when I was starving, if you had sat up to nurse my father when he lay a-dying, would yet absolve me from the bonds of gratitude. You know enough, doubtless, of the process of canonisation to be aware that, a hundred years after the death of Damien, there will appear a man charged with the painful office of the *devil's advocate*. After that noble brother of mine, and of all frail clay, shall have lain a century at rest, one shall accuse, one defend him. The circumstance is unusual that the devil's advocate should be a volunteer, should be a member of a sect immediately rival, and should make haste to take upon himself his ugly office ere the bones are cold; unusual, and of a taste which I shall leave my readers free to qualify; unusual, and to me inspiring. If I have at all learned the trade of using words to convey truth and to arouse emotion, you have at last furnished me with a subject. For it is in the interest of all mankind and the cause of public decency in every quarter of

¹ From "Lay Morals and Other Papers," by Robert Louis Stevenson.
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the world, not only that Damien should be righted, but that you and your letter should be displayed at length, in their true colours, to the public eye.

To do this properly, I must begin by quoting you at large: I shall then proceed to criticise your utterance from several points of view, divine and human, in the course of which I shall attempt to draw again and with more specification the character of the dead saint whom it has pleased you to vilify: so much being done, I shall say farewell to you for ever.

"Honolulu, August 2, 1889.

"REV. H. B. GAGE.

"Dear Brother,—In answer to your inquiries about Father Damien, I can only reply that we who knew the man are surprised at the extravagant newspaper laudations, as if he was a most saintly philanthropist. The simple truth is, he was a coarse, dirty man, headstrong and bigoted. He was not sent to Molokai, but went there without orders; did not stay at the leper settlement (before he became one himself), but circulated freely over the whole island (less than half the island is devoted to the lepers), and he came often to Honolulu. He had no hand in the reforms and improvements inaugurated, which were the work of our Board of Health, as occasion required and means were provided. He was not a pure man in his relations with women, and the leprosy of which he died should be attributed to his vices and carelessness. Others have done much for the lepers, our own ministers, the government physicians, and so forth, but never with the Catholic idea of meriting eternal life.—Yours, etc.,

"C. M. HYDE."¹

To deal fitly with a letter so extraordinary, I must draw at the outset on my private knowledge of the signatory and his sect. It may offend others; scarcely you, who have been so busy to collect, so bold to publish, gossip on your rivals. And this is perhaps the moment when I may best explain to you the character of what you are to read: I conceive you as

¹ From the *Sydney Presbyterian*, October 26, 1889.

a man quite beyond and below the reticences of civility: with what measure you mete, with that shall it be measured you again; with you, at last, I rejoice to feel the button off the foil and to plunge home. And if in aught that I shall say I should offend others, your colleagues, whom I respect and remember with affection, I can but offer them my regret; I am not free, I am inspired by the consideration of interests far more large; and such pain as can be inflicted by anything from me must be indeed trifling when compared with the pain with which they read your letter. It is not the hangman, but the criminal, that brings dishonour on the house.

You belong, sir, to a sect—I believe my sect, and that in which my ancestors laboured—which has enjoyed, and partly failed to utilise, an exceptional advantage in the islands of Hawaii. The first missionaries came; they found the land already self-purged of its old and bloody faith; they were embraced, almost on their arrival, with enthusiasm; what troubles they supported came far more from whites than from Hawaiians; and to these last they stood (in a rough figure) in the shoes of God. This is not the place to enter into the degree or causes of their failure, such as it is. One element alone is pertinent, and must here be plainly dealt with. In the course of their evangelical calling, they—or too many of them—grew rich. It may be news to you that the houses of missionaries are a cause of mocking on the streets of Honolulu. It will at least be news to you, that when I returned your civil visit, the driver of my cab commented on the size, the taste, and the comfort of your home. It would have been news certainly to myself, had any one told me that afternoon that I should live to drag such matter into print. But you see, sir, how you degrade better men to your own level; and it is needful that those who are to judge betwixt you and me, betwixt Damien and the devil's advocate, should understand your letter to have been penned in a house which could raise, and that very justly, the envy and the comments of the passers-by. I think (to employ a phrase of yours which I admire) it “should be attributed” to you that you have never visited the scene of Damien's life and death. If you had, and

had recalled it, and looked about your pleasant rooms, even your pen perhaps would have been stayed.

Your sect (and remember, as far as any sect avows me, it is mine) has not done ill in a worldly sense in the Hawaiian Kingdom. When calamity befell their innocent parishioners, when leprosy descended and took root in the Eight Islands, a *quid pro quo* was to be looked for. To that prosperous mission, and to you as one of its adornments, God had sent at last an opportunity. I know I am touching here upon a nerve acutely sensitive. I know that others of your colleagues look back on the inertia of your Church, and the intrusive and decisive heroism of Damien, with something almost to be called remorse. I am sure it is so with yourself; I am persuaded your letter was inspired by a certain envy, not essentially ignoble, and the one human trait to be espied in that performance. You were thinking of the lost chance, the past day; of that which should have been conceived and was not; of the service due and not rendered. *Time was*, said the voice in your ear, in your pleasant room, as you sat raging and writing; and if the words written were base beyond parallel, the rage, I am happy to repeat—it is the only compliment I shall pay you—the rage was almost virtuous. But, sir, when we have failed, and another has succeeded; when we have stood by, and another has stepped in; when we sit and grow bulky in our charming mansions, and a plain, uncouth peasant steps into the battle, under the eyes of God, and succours the afflicted, and consoles the dying, and is himself afflicted in his turn, and dies upon the field of honour—the battle cannot be retrieved as your unhappy irritation has suggested. It is a lost battle, and lost for ever. One thing remained to you in your defeat—some rags of common honour; and these you have made haste to cast away.

Common honour; not the honour of having done anything right, but the honour of not having done aught conspicuously foul; the honour of the inert: that was what remained to you. We are not all expected to be Damiens; a man may conceive his duty more narrowly, he may love his comforts better; and none will cast a stone at him for that. But will a gentle-

man of your reverend profession allow me an example from the fields of gallantry? When two gentlemen compete for the favour of a lady, and the one succeeds and the other is rejected, and (as will sometimes happen) matter damaging to the successful rival's credit reaches the ear of the defeated, it is held by plain men of no pretensions that his mouth is, in the circumstance, almost necessarily closed. Your Church and Damien's were in Hawaii upon a rivalry to do well; to help, to edify, to set divine examples. You having (in one huge instance) failed, and Damien succeeded, I marvel it should not have occurred to you that you were doomed to silence; that when you had been outstripped in that high rivalry, and sat inglorious in the midst of your well-being, in your pleasant room—and Damien, crowned with glories and horrors, toiled and rotted in that pigstye of his under the cliffs of Kalawao—you, the elect who would not, were the last man on earth to collect and propagate gossip on the volunteer who would and did.

I think I see you—for I try to see you in the flesh as I write these sentences—I think I see you leap at the word pigstye, a hyperbolical expression at the best. "He had no hand in the reforms," he was "a coarse, dirty man"; these were your own words; and you may think it possible that I am come to support you with fresh evidence. In a sense, it is even so. Damien has been too much depicted with a conventional halo and conventional features; so drawn by men who perhaps had not the eye to remark or the pen to express the individual; or who perhaps were only blinded and silenced by generous admiration, such as I partly envy for myself—such as you, if your soul were enlightened, would envy on your bended knees. It is the least defect of such a method of portraiture that it makes the path easy for the devil's advocate, and leaves for the misuse of the slanderer a considerable field of truth. For the truth that is suppressed by friends is the readiest weapon of the enemy. The world, in your despite, may perhaps owe you something, if your letter be the means of substituting once for all a credible likeness for a wax abstraction. For, if that world at all remember you, on the day

when Damien of Molokai shall be named Saint, it will be in virtue of one work: your letter to the Reverend H. B. Gage.

You may ask on what authority I speak. It was my inclement destiny to become acquainted, not with Damien, but with Dr. Hyde. When I visited the lazaretto Damien was already in his resting grave. But such information as I have, I gathered on the spot in conversation with those who knew him well and long: some indeed who revered his memory; but others who had sparred and wrangled with him, who beheld him with no halo, who perhaps regarded him with small respect, and through whose unprepared and scarcely partial communications the plain, human features of the man shone on me convincingly. These gave me what knowledge I possess; and I learnt it in that scene where it could be most completely and sensitively understood—Kalawao, which you have never visited, about which you have never so much as endeavoured to inform yourself: for, brief as your letter is, you have found the means to stumble into that confession. "*Less than one-half of the island,*" you say, "*is devoted to the lepers.*" Molokai—"Molokai ahina," the "grey," lofty, and most desolate island—along all its northern side plunges a front of precipice into a sea of unusual profundity. This range of cliff is, from east to west, the true end and frontier of the island. Only in one spot there projects into the ocean a certain triangular and rugged down, grassy, stony, windy, and rising in the midst into a hill with a dead crater: the whole bearing to the cliff that overhangs it somewhat the same relation as a bracket to a wall. With this hint you will now be able to pick out the leper station on a map; you will be able to judge how much of Molokai is thus cut off between the surf and precipice, whether less than a half, or less than a quarter, or a fifth, or a tenth—or say, a twentieth; and the next time you burst into print you will be in a position to share with us the issue of your calculations.

I imagine you to be one of those persons who talk with cheerfulness of that place which oxen and wain-ropes could not drag you to behold. You, who do not even know its situation on the map, probably denounce sensational descriptions,

stretching your limbs the while in your pleasant parlour on Beretania Street. When I was pulled ashore there one early morning, there sat with me in the boat two sisters, bidding farewell (in humble imitation of Damien) to the lights and joys of human life. One of these wept silently; I could not withhold myself from joining her. Had you been there, it is my belief that nature would have triumphed even in you; and as the boat drew but a little nearer, and you beheld the stairs crowded with abominable deformations of our common manhood, and saw yourself landing in the midst of such a population as only now and then surrounds us in the horror of a nightmare—what a haggard eye you would have rolled over your reluctant shoulder towards the house on Beretania Street! Had you gone on; had you found every fourth face a blot upon the landscape; had you visited the hospital and seen the butt-ends of human beings lying there almost unrecognisable, but still breathing, still thinking, still remembering; you would have understood that life in the lazaretto is an ordeal from which the nerves of a man's spirit shrink, even as his eye quails under the brightness of the sun; you would have felt it was (even to-day) a pitiful place to visit and a hell to dwell in. It is not the fear of possible infection. That seems a little thing when compared with the pain, the pity, and the disgust of the visitor's surroundings, and the atmosphere of affliction, disease, and physical disgrace in which he breathes. I do not think I am a man more than usually timid; but I never recall the days and nights I spent upon that island promontory (eight days and seven nights), without heartfelt thankfulness that I am somewhere else. I find in my diary that I speak of my stay as a "grinding experience": I have once jotted in the margin "*Harrowing* is the word"; and when the *Mokolii* bore me at last towards the outer world, I kept repeating to myself, with a new conception of their pregnancy, those simple words of the song—

"'Tis the most distressful country that ever yet was seen."

And observe: that which I saw and suffered from was a settlement purged, bettered, beautified; the new village built,

the hospital and the Bishop-Home excellently arranged; the sisters, the doctor, and the missionaries, all indefatigable in their noble tasks. It was a different place when Damien came there, and made his great renunciation, and slept that first night under a tree amidst his rotting brethren: alone with pestilence; and looking forward (with what courage, with what pitiful sinkings of dread, God only knows) to a life-time of dressing sores and stumps.

You will say, perhaps, I am too sensitive, that sights as painful abound in cancer hospitals and are confronted daily by doctors and nurses. I have long learned to admire and envy the doctors and the nurses. But there is no cancer hospital so large and populous as Kalawao and Kalaupapa; and in such a matter every fresh case, like every inch of length in the pipe of an organ, deepens the note of the impression; for what daunts the onlooker is that monstrous sum of human suffering by which he stands surrounded. Lastly, no doctor or nurse is called upon to enter once for all the doors of that gehenna; they do not say farewell, they need not abandon hope, on its sad threshold; they but go for a time to their high calling, and can look forward as they go to relief, to recreation, and to rest. But Damien shut to with his own hand the doors of his own sepulchre.

I shall now extract three passages from my diary at Kalawao.

A. "Damien is dead and already somewhat ungratefully remembered in the field of his labours and sufferings. 'He was a good man, but very officious,' says one. Another tells me he had fallen (as other priests so easily do) into something of the ways and habits of thought of a Kanaka; but he had the wit to recognise the fact, and the good sense to laugh at" [over] "it. A plain man it seems he was; I cannot find he was a popular."

B. "After Ragsdale's death" [Ragsdale was a famous Luna, or overseer, of the unruly settlement] "there followed a brief term of office by Father Damien which served only to publish the weakness of that noble man. He was rough in his ways, and he had no control. Authority was relaxed;

Damien's life was threatened, and he was soon eager to resign."

C. "Of Damien I begin to have an idea. He seems to have been a man of the peasant class, certainly of the peasant type: shrewd; ignorant and bigoted, yet with an open mind, and capable of receiving and digesting a reproof if it were bluntly administered; superbly generous in the least thing as well as in the greatest, and as ready to give his last shirt (although not without human grumbling) as he had been to sacrifice his life; essentially indiscreet and officious, which made him a troublesome colleague; domineering in all his ways, which made him incurably unpopular with the Kanakas, but yet destitute of real authority, so that his boys laughed at him and he must carry out his wishes by the means of bribes. He learned to have a mania for doctoring; and set up the Kanakas against the remedies of his regular rivals: perhaps (if anything matter at all in the treatment of such a disease) the worst thing that he did, and certainly the easiest. The best and worst of the man appear very plainly in his dealings with Mr. Chapman's money; he had originally laid it out" [intended to lay it out] "entirely for the benefit of Catholics, and even so not wisely, but after a long, plain talk, he admitted his error fully and revised the list. The sad state of the boys' home is in part the result of his lack of control; in part, of his own slovenly ways and false ideas of hygiene. Brother officials used to call it 'Damien's Chinatown.' 'Well,' they would say, 'your Chinatown keeps growing.' And he would laugh with perfect good-nature, and adhere to his errors with perfect obstinacy. So much I have gathered of truth about this plain, noble human brother and father of ours; his imperfections are the traits of his face, by which we know him for our fellow; his martyrdom and his example nothing can lessen or annul; and only a person here on the spot can properly appreciate their greatness."

I have set down these private passages, as you perceive, without correction; thanks to you, the public has them in their bluntness. They are almost a list of the man's faults, for it is rather these that I was seeking: with his virtues, with the

heroic profile of his life, I and the world were already sufficiently acquainted. I was besides a little suspicious of Catholic testimony; in no ill sense, but merely because Damien's admirers and disciples were the least likely to be critical. I know you will be more suspicious still; and the facts set down above were one and all collected from the lips of Protestants who had opposed the father in his life. Yet I am strangely deceived, or they build up the image of a man, with all his weaknesses, essentially heroic, and alive with rugged honesty, generosity and mirth.

Take it for what it is, rough private jottings of the worst sides of Damien's character, collected from the lips of those who had laboured with and (in your own phrase) "knew the man";—though I question whether Damien would have said that he knew you. Take it, and observe with wonder how well you were served by your gossips, how ill by your intelligence and sympathy; in how many points of fact we are at one, and how widely our appreciations vary. There is something wrong here; either with you or me. It is possible, for instance, that you, who seem to have so many ears in Kalawao, had heard of the affair of Mr. Chapman's money, and were singly struck by Damien's intended wrong-doing. I was struck with that also, and set it fairly down; but I was struck much more by the fact that he had the honesty of mind to be convinced. I may here tell you that it was a long business; that one of his colleagues sat with him late into the night, multiplying arguments and accusations; that the father listened as usual with "perfect good-nature and perfect obstinacy"; but at the last, when he was persuaded—"Yes," said he, "I am very much obliged to you; you have done me a service; it would have been a theft." There are many (not Catholics merely) who require their heroes and saints to be infallible; to these the story will be painful; not to the true lovers, patrons, and servants of mankind.

And I take it, this is a type of our division; that you are one of those who have an eye for faults and failures; that you take a pleasure to find and publish them; and that, having found them, you make haste to forget the overvailing virtues

and the real success which had alone introduced them to your knowledge. It is a dangerous frame of mind. That you may understand how dangerous, and into what a situation it has already brought you, we will (if you please) go hand-in-hand through the different phrases of your letter, and candidly examine each from the point of view of its truth, its appositeness, and its charity.

Damien was *coarse*.

It is very possible. You make us sorry for the lepers who had only a coarse old peasant for their friend and father. But you, who were so refined, why were you not there, to cheer them with the lights of culture? Or may I remind you that we have some reason to doubt if John the Baptist were genteel; and in the case of Peter, on whose career you doubtless dwell approvingly in the pulpit, no doubt at all he was a "coarse, headstrong" fisherman! Yet even in our Protestant Bibles Peter is called Saint.

Damien was *dirty*.

He was. Think of the poor lepers annoyed with this dirty comrade! But the clean Dr. Hyde was at his food in a fine house.

Damien was *headstrong*.

I believe you are right again; and I thank God for his strong head and heart.

Damien was *bigoted*.

I am not fond of bigots myself, because they are not fond of me. But what is meant by bigotry, that we should regard it as a blemish in a priest? Damien believed his own religion with the simplicity of a peasant or a child; as I would I could suppose that you do. For this, I wonder at him some way off; and had that been his only character, should have avoided him in life. But the point of interest in Damien, which has caused him to be so much talked about and made him at last the subject of your pen and mine, was that, in him, his bigotry, his intense and narrow faith, wrought potently for good, and

strengthened him to be one of the world's heroes and exemplars.

Damien was not sent to Molokai, but went there without orders.

Is this a misreading? or do you really mean the words for blame? I have heard Christ, in the pulpits of our Church, held up for imitation on the ground that His sacrifice was voluntary. Does Dr. Hyde think otherwise?

Damien did not stay at the settlement, etc.

It is true he was allowed many indulgences. Am I to understand that you blame the father for profiting by these, or the officers for granting them? In either case, it is a mighty Spartan standard to issue from the house on Beretania Street; and I am convinced you will find yourself with few supporters.

Damien had no hand in the reforms, etc.

I think even you will admit that I have already been frank in my description of the man I am defending; but before I take you up upon this head, I will be franker still, and tell you that perhaps nowhere in the world can a man taste a more pleasurable sense of contrast than when he passes from Damien's "Chinatown" at Kalawao to the beautiful Bishop-Home at Kalaupapa. At this point, in my desire to make all fair for you, I will break my rule and adduce Catholic testimony. Here is a passage from my diary about my visit to the Chinatown, from which you will see how it is (even now) regarded by its own officials: "We went round all the dormitories, refectories, etc.—dark and dingy enough, with a superficial cleanliness, which he" [Mr. Dutton, the lay brother] "did not seek to defend. 'It is almost decent,' said he; 'the sisters will make that all right when we get them here.' " And yet I gathered it was already better since Damien was dead, and far better than when he was there alone and had his own (not always excellent) way. I have now come far enough to meet you on a common ground of fact; and I tell you that, to a mind not prejudiced by jealousy,

all the reforms of the lazaretto, and even those which he most vigorously opposed, are properly the work of Damien. They are the evidence of his success; they are what his heroism provoked from the reluctant and the careless. Many were before him in the field; Mr. Meyer, for instance, of whose faithful work we hear too little: there have been many since; and some had more worldly wisdom, though none had more devotion, than our saint. Before his day, even you will confess, they had effected little. It was his part, by one striking act of martyrdom, to direct all men's eyes on that distressful country. At a blow, and with the price of his life, he made the place illustrious and public. And that, if you will consider largely, was the one reform needful; pregnant of all that should succeed. It brought money; it brought (best individual addition of them all) the sisters; it brought supervision, for public opinion and public interest landed with the man at Kalawao. If ever any man brought reforms, and died to bring them, it was he. There is not a clean cup or towel in the Bishop-Home, but dirty Damien washed it.

Damien was not a pure man in his relations with women, etc.

How do you know that? Is this the nature of the conversation in that house on Beretania Street which the cabman envied, driving past?—racy details of the misconduct of the poor peasant priest, toiling under the cliffs of Molokai?

Many have visited the station before me; they seem not to have heard the rumour. When I was there I heard many shocking tales, for my informants were men speaking with the plainness of the laity; and I heard plenty of complaints of Damien. Why was this never mentioned? and how came it to you in the retirement of your clerical parlour?

But I must not even seem to deceive you. This scandal, when I read it in your letter, was not new to me. I had heard it once before; and I must tell you how. There came to Samoa a man from Honolulu; he, in a public-house on the beach, volunteered the statement that Damien had “contracted the disease from having connection with the female lepers”;

and I find a joy in telling you how the report was welcomed in a public-house. A man sprang to his feet; I am not at liberty to give his name, but from what I heard I doubt if you would care to have him to dinner in Beretania Street. "You miserable little ——" (here is a word I dare not print, it would so shock your ears). "You miserable little —," he cried, "if the story were a thousand times true, can't you see you are a million times a lower — for daring to repeat it?" I wish it could be told of you that when the report reached you in your house, perhaps after family worship, you had found in your soul enough holy anger to receive it with the same expressions: ay, even with that one which I dare not print; it would not need to have been blotted away, like Uncle Toby's oath, by the tears of the recording angel; it would have been counted to you for your brightest righteousness. But you have deliberately chosen the part of the man from Honolulu, and you have played it with improvements of your own. The man from Honolulu—miserable, leering creature—communicated the tale to a rude knot of beach-combing drinkers in a public-house, where (I will so far agree with your temperance opinions) man is not always at his noblest; and the man from Honolulu had himself been drinking—drinking, we may charitably fancy, to excess. It was to your "Dear Brother, the Reverend H. B. Gage," that you chose to communicate the sickening story; and the blue ribbon which adorns your portly bosom forbids me to allow you the extenuating plea that you were drunk when it was done. Your "dear brother"—a brother indeed—made haste to deliver up your letter (as a means of grace, perhaps) to the religious papers; where, after many months, I found and read and wondered at it; and whence I have now reproduced it for the wonder of others. And you and your dear brother have, by this cycle of operations, built up a contrast very edifying to examine in detail. The man whom you would not care to have to dinner, on the one side; on the other, the Reverend Dr. Hyde and the Reverend H. B. Gage: the Apia bar-room, the Honolulu manse.

But I fear you scarce appreciate how you appear to your

fellow-men; and to bring it home to you, I will suppose your story to be true. I will suppose—and God forgive me for supposing it—that Damien faltered and stumbled in his narrow path of duty; I will suppose that, in the horror of his isolation, perhaps in the fever of incipient disease, he, who was doing so much more than he had sworn, failed in the letter of his priestly oath—he, who was so much a better man than either you or me, who did what we have never dreamed of daring—he too tasted of our common frailty. “O, Iago, the pity of it!” The least tender should be moved to tears; the most incredulous to prayer. And all that you could do was to pen your letter to the Reverend H. B. Gage!

Is it growing at all clear to you what a picture you have drawn of your own heart? I will try yet once again to make it clearer. You had a father: suppose this tale were about him, and some informant brought it to you, proof in hand: I am not making too high an estimate of your emotional nature when I suppose you would regret the circumstance? that you would feel the tale of frailty the more keenly since it shamed the author of your days? and that the last thing you would do would be to publish it in the religious press? Well, the man who tried to do what Damien did, is my father, and the father of the man in the Apia bar, and the father of all who love goodness; and he was your father too, if God had given you grace to see it.

